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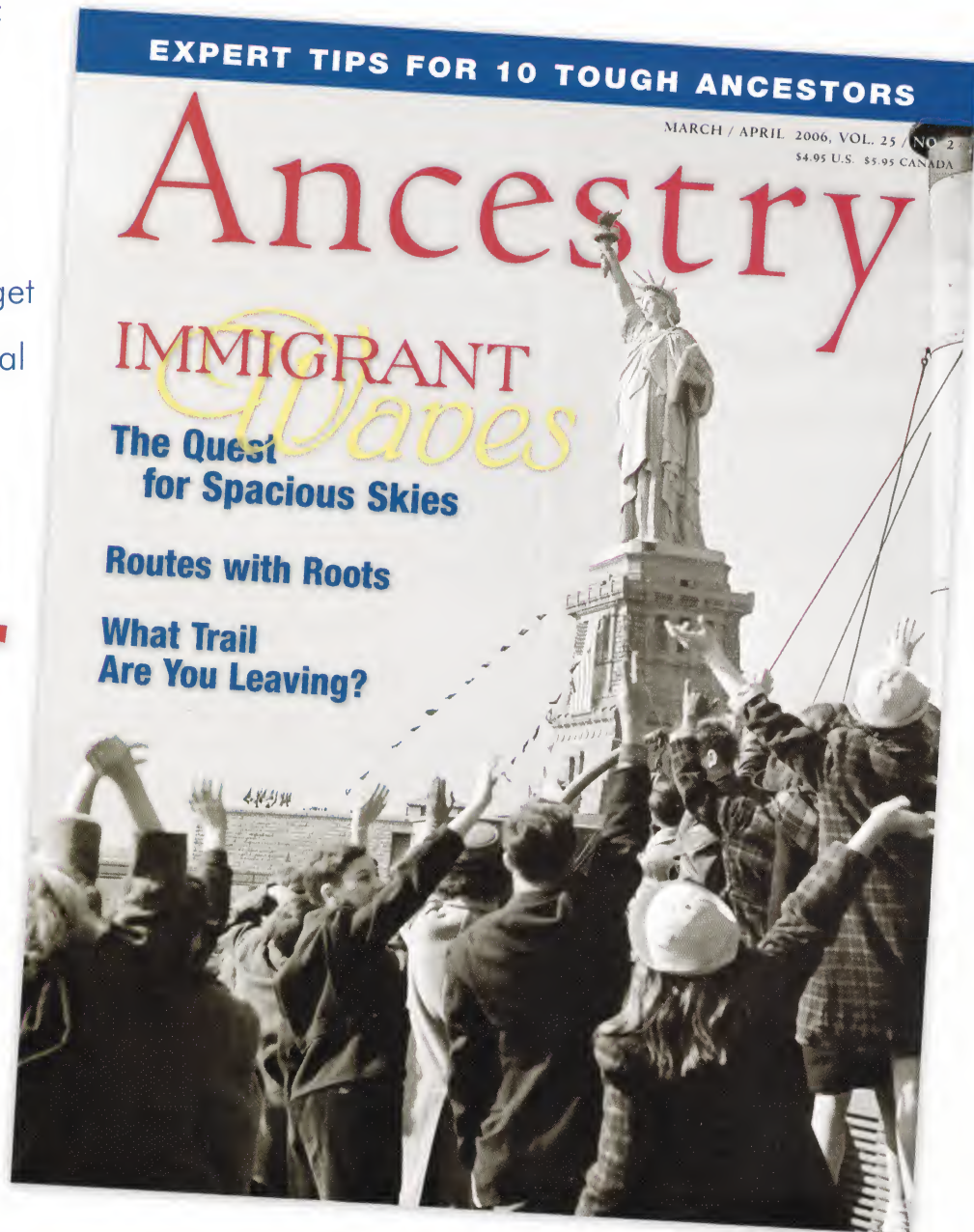
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Pulling out my mom's linen tablecloth for a recent party triggered memories of long-ago Sunday dinners with family and friends gathered around the table telling stories about the past.

Caught up in a bit of nostalgia as we readied the table for the party, I asked each of my daughters to tell me about something she had inherited that held special meaning.



Juliana's treasure is a watch, given to her by my husband's mother, that conjures loving memories and stories her grandmother told about growing up in Cleveland. For Diana, touching the policeman's badge that belonged to her ancestor stirs her imagination about the man who chased and caught a murderer in the dark streets of Brooklyn in 1863. Tricia treasures an American flag dated 1894, embroidered by her great-grandmother. As she teaches her daughter to embroider, she wonders about the woman whose fingers worked the thread on this heirloom cherished through five generations.

My mother's engagement ring that Laura inherited carries with it the bittersweet story of harsh times. Widowed with six children, my mother was forced to pawn the ring as a means of paycheck-to-paycheck survival until her sister (who raised me) finally bought it back, restoring the ring's and my mother's dignity. My own favorite keepsake is the well-worn prayer book that belonged to my second dad—the uncle who raised me. It speaks clearly of the man who inspired me most.

I couldn't resist asking the friends in the office about their "attic treasures." Jennifer Utley's great-grandmother gave her a piano built in the 1890s with complete confidence that Jennifer would play church music on it. Suzanne Russo Adams was the beneficiary of her great-aunt's cedar chest, filled with photographs and other family mementos.

It's the Purple Heart earned by his grandfather in World War II that Rob Davis hopes to hand to his children. For Matthew Rayback, books given to him by his father are what he most wants to pass to his children. A memory box holding two tiny gold rings and bonnets, one belonging to Tana Pedersen Lord's grandmother, the other to her grandmother's twin sister who died in infancy, that Tana wishes to inherit. Michael Sherrod appreciates most the sentimental value of his grandmother's intricate lace work and the tiny notebook accounts of her tragic life.

Cherished-but-lost souvenirs include Andre Brummer's grandfather's trumpet from World War I, and three glass bottles—fused together in the fires following the 1906 San Francisco earthquake—that once belonged to the great-grandmother of Anastasia Sutherland Tyler (see "Home Sources away from Home," page 24, for details). Jeanie Croasmun can only wish her family had saved things, but instead, like those on my father's side of the family, cleaned house, not wishing to relive the past.

Mark Vermeulen so cherishes the memories of churning buttermilk with his grandmother that he once offered to buy the churn from her. Instead, she gave it to him. Today, Mark uses the churn to display family recipes—each one handwritten by his grandmother.


"These treasures have the special ability to create awe, wonder, and reverence for the past," says Matt Wright, who inherited a double-sided shaver from his great-grandfather. It's a link to a man he admires, he says, made more meaningful by the fact that his grandfather used it every day.

So, is the past really over?

Sometimes a memory is all we have in our personal attics; other times, however, we have more—mementos and items we can hold. When we can touch a memory, even the humblest object has a certain power to transport us back in time to the person who once owned it. And each memory triggered by an object in the attic proves that the past is not over, but, inside each of us, very much alive.

Loretta D. Szucs

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Pass the Butter

In our March/April 2006 issue of *Ancestry Magazine*, we erroneously listed **one cup of butter** as equal to *one stick* of butter in our *Heritage Recipe* ("Honey Taffy," page 15). The correct measurement is **one cup or two sticks of butter**. We apologize for any confusion this may have caused and thank sharp-eyed reader, Margaret, for alerting us to the mistake.

Awarding Efforts

Ancestry Magazine columnist Myra Vanderpool Gormley is being honored by the International Society of Family History Writers and Editors (ISFHWE) through the establishment of an Award of Merit in her name.

Changes

Ancestry Magazine is now packed with more information than ever. This issue features the debut of two new regular columns—*Found* (page 61) and *Pro/Confessional* (page 64).

Having something you'd like to discuss with *Ancestry Magazine*? Put it in a letter and send it off to editor@ancestrymagazine.com.

When do you research your family history? You Said

6%	Early Morning
4%	Mid-Day
3%	Late Afternoon
22%	Evening
20%	Late Night
43%	Whenever I can spare a moment

Voice your opinion in the next *Ancestry Magazine* poll at www.ancestry.com/community.

Subscription to *Ancestry.com* not required to vote or view results. Polls change weekly so check back often.

What's the Best Thing You Found in the Attic?

Brush Strokes with Fame

Growing up, I remember an oil painting, yellowed, in a not-too-flattering old frame, that hung on my grandmother's wall. The painting is of The Strand at Cushendun Bay in Ireland. Whenever anyone asked Grandma about how she got it, she would simply reply, "A friend of mine painted it for me."

Several years before Grandma died, she allowed all of the grandchildren to "raid her house of its belongings." I asked for two paintings: *The Strand* and a painting that Grandma's brother, Danny, painted.

Eventually the paintings made their way to a crawl space in my house. One day, while venturing into the crawl space for something, I encountered the paintings. I looked at the signature at the bottom right of *The Strand*—JH Craig. I searched for information on Craig and found it—James Humbert Craig, the "People's Painter." He was an impressionist who regularly painted with oils on board. I also found a book about Craig that mentions Grandma's brother Danny, who studied under Craig.

Reframed and carefully cleaned, the paintings now both hang in my home. And the paintings and the book shed some light on the personalities and lives of my ancestors—good stuff.

Mike Dziallo

Quite a Card

I found an old letter written to my husband's aunt back in the 1960s from a researcher who thought he might be related to her.

The researcher said he had found a half-sister to my husband's grandmother Nettie, but he never mentioned the half-sister's name. He said that his mother was a sister to Nettie, but again, no names. He also said he thought that his unnamed grandmother (paternal

or maternal?) was a sister to Nettie's husband's mother. It was all very confusing—I had to read it many times to make any sense of it.

Confusion aside, I attacked the puzzle. After two years, I put the pieces together and found three generations of Nettie's ancestors and a few living cousins, too. I never would have figured out that much without the letter.

Janet Newell

Buried Treasure

My interest in genealogy started with an item in the back closet at my grandparents' house—a "treasure chest" with an address painted on it: "Ingeri Torvik, Duluth, Minnesota." When I questioned my grandma, she dismissed me with a shrug.

In the following years, I heard stories about my grandfather being married twice—his first wife died after giving birth to twins. Her name—Ingeri.

When I asked how old the trunk was, no one knew, but I learned that Ingeri's name was painted on the trunk because she had used it to bring her belongings from Norway to America. Thus began my interest in genealogy. I eventually discovered that Ingeri, her brother, and several neighbors left Norway in 1887 and settled in Wisconsin. In 1889 she married my grandfather and they had three daughters before Ingeri gave birth to the twins, one of whom died at birth, the other raised by an aunt and uncle.

Marilyn Sjostrom

Next issue:

How was your family history research different five, ten, or twenty years ago?

Tell us all about it. Send your stories and contact information to editor@ancestrymagazine.com.

Letters

To the Editor

I thoroughly enjoyed the March/April issue of *Ancestry Magazine*—so many articles of interest to me—but I was very frustrated because I could find no description of some of the fine photographs throughout the issue. Aside from the cover photos, most photos carried only the copyright holder's name but no description. For example, the wonderful photo of immigrants on pages 18 and 19—how much more interesting to have a date and location accompanying the photograph. And the heartbreaking photo on page 25—where and when?

Virginia Smith

Corbis, the copyright holder of the photos mentioned above, was able to provide the following information:

Page 18 and 19: Immigrants arriving in New York, 27 May 1920.

Page 25: Czechoslovakian immigrants aboard the SS Lafayette, 24 August 1920.

—ed.

I was pleased that you used my photo for *Photo Corner* in the March/April issue of *Ancestry Magazine*



(page 14), but I'm sad that it didn't include where I reside—Richland, Washington.

Renée Petersen

In the *Editor's Note* in the March/April 2006 issues of *Ancestry Magazine*, there is a quote from *The Americans: The Democratic Experience*. The correct spelling of the author's name was not Boorstein, but Boorstin.

Brenda Wesner

Now—at Ancestry.com

Who Wouldn't?

Why would more than 200,000 people walk across San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge in a single day? Because, as one official said on the bridge's opening day, "Everybody's doing it."

Read about it in the Ancestry.com Historic Newspaper Collection, now updated to include more than 16 million pages from over one thousand newspapers. Thumb through the 27 March 1937 *Oakland Tribune* to learn about the people who made the Golden Gate trek: walkers who arrived early, others who came following an all-night party at San Francisco's Civic Auditorium (said the paper, a "dress and undress affair where everything

goes"), and still more who waited until the end of the day. But why all the foot traffic? Cars weren't permitted on the bridge until the following day.

Learn more about events and people—even your own ancestors—in the historic newspaper collection at Ancestry.com <www.ancestry.com/search/rectype/periodicals/news>.

Talk Is Free

Need a regular dose of genealogy goodies? Check out *Ancestry Weekly Journal* editor Julian Smith's new family history blog, *24/7 Family History Circle*, at <<http://blogs.ancestry.com/circle>>. Find photos, tips, and advice from Smith, family history professionals, and readers like you.

Odd Jobs

If you've ever monkeyed around with a task, take heed—at least your job title didn't contain the word "monkey." A handful of folks living in England in 1881 weren't so lucky.

A pair of powder monkeys, a monkey trainer, a monkey presser, the engineer of the HM Tug *Monkey*, and a solitary monkey tamer are all safely tucked away in the census, and searchable by occupation or keyword in the 1881 England census at Ancestry.com.

Search for your ancestors (and their occupations) in the UK census collection at <www.ancestry.com/search/rectype/census/uk>.

6 Pearls of Preservation Wisdom from Mom

If you can't handle the heat, get the memento out of the kitchen.

Or whatever inhospitable locale you've chosen to store that photo, document, or "something else" you'd like to keep for a long, long time. As a rule, if the environment is uncomfortable to you, it's not comfortable for the object.

Cross your Ts and dot your Is. Someday a future generation will probably want to read your journal and your notes, and they'll be much happier if the words are legible.

An ounce of preservation is worth a pound of cure. You never know when the unexpected might happen, and it's much easier to prepare for the worst than it is to undo the damage later.

Always be prepared. Pen, paper, pocket-knife, GPS, flashlight, digital camera, notebook computer—that's what Mom (or was it the Boy Scouts) was talking about, right?

Never look a gift source in the mouth. Take notes, make a copy, securely store the original, log everything into your favorite software program, and be very thankful that other people care about your family history and want to help.

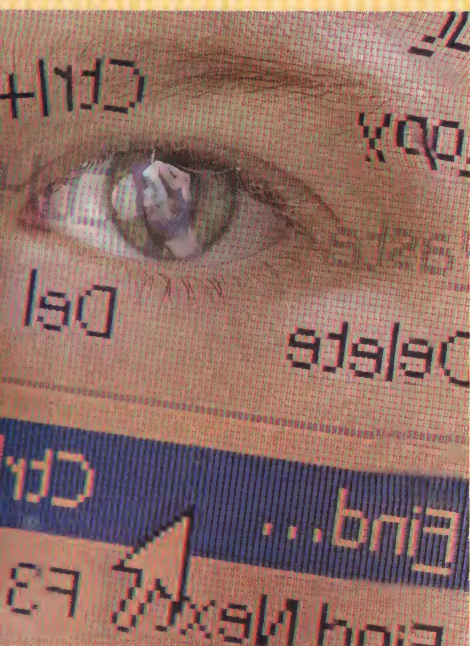
The way to an ancestor's heart is through the stomach. That's why only the best recipes were preserved for your generation. If you haven't already, create a usable and shareable collection of the recipes, jotting down memories and including family photos with each—related or not. Add a few gems from your generation and be ready to pass the collection on when the kids grow up and start to look hungry.

Ask Around

So you inherited the arrowhead collection . . . now what?

Not every memento you find in an attic can be easily and safely stashed, scanned and indexed, and dropped into a pre-cut archival box. And, quite honestly, some of them deserve to be seen. But exactly how do you display that artifact without compromising it?

Spend a lunch hour to learn how the professionals do it. Visit a local museum housing the types of artifacts in your collection (artwork, natural history, media), and ask questions. If you live by a branch of the National Archives, stop in for a visit and inquire about classes, conferences, and sessions. If you're pressed for time, check historic preservation and museum websites before you go for Frequently Asked Questions and upcoming events. You may find a seminar has already been scheduled addressing your topic, or you could luck into an **Ask the Curator** link so your question gets personal attention.



Get Organized

Searching for Files

It's inevitable. At some point, you'll accidentally drop an electronic file into the wrong folder on your computer. Not a big deal until the next time you want to open the file—and you don't know where it is.

That's where desktop searching software comes in. Each program, like *Google Desktop Search*, *Windows Desktop Search*, *Yahoo! Desktop Search*, and *Copernic* acts as a search engine through your personal files. Search documents, photos, music, e-mail, and any number of other saved files. The programs are inexpensive (the four mentioned above are free downloads—search the Internet to locate each) and as easy to use as an Internet browser.

While none of these programs will organize your files, having a desktop search available for those moments when you misplace a document can save you a lot of time. And, when you locate the file quickly and easily, you can use the time you've saved to place the file where it really belongs.

Getting Out



FLEA MARKETS

For years people have been giving me things from flea markets. A boyfriend gave me a set of cast-iron flies (flies are still here, boyfriend's long gone). From my brother-in-law came a set of kitschy coffee cups with gold moon handles. And my sister presented me with the *Life Magazine* that was published on the day I was born—in pristine condition.

There's something satisfying about sorting through discarded goods, finding that one must-have, and walking away with the deal of a lifetime under your arm. Your finds may directly relate to an ancestor or add social context to a life. You may never come across anything you actually need, but you're almost guaranteed to find something you want.

With the weather warming up, now is a great time to get out and relive a little of your past (or someone else's) at a flea market. Finding one is simple—just type in “flea market” and the state in any Internet search engine.

—Jeanie Croasmun

Events: May–June 2006

Exhibit—Cradled in Judea: Jewish Orphanages in NY, 1860–1960

Through June 2006
<www.cjh.org>

37th Annual Southern California Genealogy Jamboree and Resource Expo

5–6 May: Burbank, California
<www.scgsgenealogy.com>

Nebraska State Genealogical Society 2006 Conference

5–6 May: Beatrice, Nebraska
<www.rootsweb.com/~nesgs>

Scottish Festival and Celtic Gathering

5–7 May: Bridgeport, West Virginia
<www.scots-westvirginia.org>

Shepherd's Harvest Sheep & Wool Festival

6 May: Lake Elmo, Minnesota
<www.shepherdsharvestfestival.org>

A Taste of the Past Food Festival

12–13 May: Wellsville, Utah
<www.americanwestcenter.org>

NARA Workshop—Finding Your Lost Cherokee

19 May: Kansas City, Missouri
<www.archives.gov/central-plains/kansas-city/public/workshops.html>

8th Annual Historic Home and Garden Tour

20 May: Bentonville, Arkansas
<www.peelmansion.org/Events.htm>

Genealogy Summer Camp

4–9 June: Toronto, Ontario, Canada
<www.torontofamilyhistory.org>

2006 National Genealogical Society Conference

7–10 June: Chicago, Illinois
<www.eshow2000.com/ngs/conf_program.cfm>

Franklin Folk Festival

9–10 June: Franklin, North Carolina
<www.franklin-chamber.com>

5th Annual Cherokee Ancestry Conference

9–10 June: Tulsa, Oklahoma
<www.cherokeeheritage.org>

Festa Italiana

9–11 June: Kansas City, Missouri
<www.crowncenter.com/events/index.html>

28th Annual Ethnic Dance Festival

10–25 June (weekends): San Francisco, California
<www.worldartswest.org/edf/index.html>

Institute of Genealogy and Historical Research

11–16 June: Birmingham, Alabama
<www.samford.edu/schools/ighr/ighr.html>

NARA Workshop—Early Indians in Missouri and Kansas

16 June: Kansas City, Missouri
<www.archives.gov/central-plains/kansas-city/public/workshops.html>

International Folkfest

17 June: Murfreesboro, Tennessee
<www.mboro-international-folkfest.org>

A Taste of Scotland

17 June: Franklin, North Carolina
<www.scottishtartans.org>

2006 Genealogical Society of Hispanic Americans Conference

23–25 June: Albuquerque, New Mexico
<www.gsha.net>

Palatines to America 2006 National Seminar and Annual Meeting

23–25 June: Richmond, Virginia
<www.palam.org/events.htm>

Polish Fest

23–25 June: Milwaukee, Wisconsin
<www.polishfest.org>

6th Annual Italian American Summer Festival

25 June: Berea, Ohio
<www.italianamericansummerfestival.com>

Symposium—Three Centuries of Ulster-American History and Experience

28 June–1 July: Knoxville, Tennessee
<www.east-tennessee-history.org>

Kodachrome or Ferrottype?

By Tana Pedersen Lord

Photographs—whether taken last week or one hundred years ago—are a real family treasure. But when you're not exactly sure who the smiling (or scowling) person is in the photo you've found, it may help to identify the time period in which the image was created. How? By dating the photo type. Here is a little information to help you get started.

Daguerrotypes (1839–1860)



The first “practical” photograph, the daguerreotype was made of silver-plated copper with a polished, mirror-like surface. Because of their fragility, these photos were often covered with glass and ornamental mats and then enclosed in small, hinged cases that were padded with satin or velvet.

Tintypes or Ferrotypes (1856–early 1900s)

The tintype was the most popular form of photography during the Civil War. It was made of a thin sheet of iron coated by black varnish. Its durability allowed soldiers to carry photos of loved ones into battle and send pictures home without fear of ruining them.



Cabinet Cards (1866–1900)



The majority of photographs taken in the late-1800s belong in the “cabinet card” category. Photographs were printed on super thin paper that was then mounted on thick cards. These wallet-sized images usually have the name of the photographer or photo studio printed on the front of the card.

Portrait Postcards (1900–1920s)



Around the turn of the century, photographers could print black and white photos on postcard backs. The finished postcard could then be affixed with a stamp and dropped in the mail. Portrait postcard styles continuously changed through the years, and, after 1907, the back of the postcard was divided into two areas—one for the mailing address and the other for a personalized message.

The Black and White Snapshot (1900–1960s)

In 1900, Kodak changed photography with the release of the Brownie camera. The original Brownie took black-and-white, 2¼-inch square photos, although Kodak changed the size of the images to 2¼-inch x 3¼-inch on later models. At an affordable price of \$1, and with easy-to-use controls, the camera was not just for professionals anymore.



Color Transparencies or Slides (1940s–1970s)

Although some professionals were creating color photographs in the late 1800s, the ability to develop color film didn't become widely available until the 1940s and 1950s. Color slides and slide projectors became popular, and color photographs have dominated amateur photography ever since.



1841 tying Up Eng

By Matthew Rayback

Ever struggle to find someone in the 1841 UK census? If so, you weren't alone. Researchers looking at digital or microfilmed images of the now-infamous census are often dismayed to find that most of the replicated enumerators' books are almost entirely illegible.

Why? According to Ancestry.com Index Manager Echo King, the main reason the pages are so hard to read is that enumerators wrote everything in pencil, which aged over time, faded, and previously wasn't able to be filmed well. "In some cases," says King, "the writing was so faint that [a researcher] would have to visit the [UK] National Archives and view the original to get any useful information."

But a trip to the National Archives can be daunting, impractical, and frustrating. Plus, there are no guarantees, says King, who made the trip specifically to see what she could learn about the 1841 census documents. “When we examined the originals,” King says, “we found that some of the pages still couldn’t be read.” Something had to be done.

In January 2006, Jack Reese and Laryn Brown, content specialists with Ancestry.com, traveled to the archives in London to fix the problem.

"We used a top-of-the-line professional copy stand with a 16-megapixel digital camera and daylight-balanced lights to achieve high resolution," says Brown. "We did not use any special filters or lighting, as overexposure was [one of the problems] with the original filming."

The pair photographed nearly 20,000 images from the pages of the 1841 UK census, which covers around 1.6 million names. Today, they consider their project a stunning success.

“We proved that with good lighting, high resolution, and professional post-processing to enhance the contrast, even the most faint samples created legible names that can now be transcribed,” Brown says.

That's good news for researchers. The new, improved images and the corresponding updated indexes are now available at both Ancestry.co.uk and Ancestry.com.

Before

[illegible]

After

City or Borough of _____		Parish or Township of <u>Barnstable</u>		AGE and SEX		PROFESSION, TRADE, EMPLOYMENT, or of INDEPENDENT MEANS.	Where Born	
PLACE	HOUSES	NAMES of each Person who abode therein the preceding Night.	Males	Females	Within Town in same County		Within State	Foreign
					Barnstable	1	John Brown	24
	Henry	25		1				
	William	1						
	Martha Wilson	20		1				
	James Brown	20		1				
	John Brown	20		1				
	John Thompson	20		1				
	John Thompson	12		1				
	John			1				
	John			1				



SIXTY-SIX YEARS OF ENCHILADAS

Not long ago, as I was anticipating my sixty-sixth birthday, my heart grew tender, and I started reflecting back on the sacrifices my mother made to give me life. So at the Sunday dinner that my family had planned to honor my birthday, I decided I would honor my mother. My goal was to pass on to my children and their spouses a legacy of appreciation for the woman who raised me.

Growing up, we enjoyed several special dishes my mother would cook for us. High on the list of family favorites was Mama's homemade enchilada casserole. In his youth, my father had worked in Mexico for a time. And, after leaving, he and Mama continued to work closely with a number of Mexicans who were also their very close friends.

It always seemed to me that the supper of Mama's enchiladas and Spanish rice was a symbol of the love for another culture that my parents planted in my heart as a child. So for my birthday dinner, I made the enchilada casserole that Mama used to make. And, as part of the celebration, I shared stories about my mother and my love for her enchilada casserole. But, more than that, I shared my gratitude for her love and the difficult time Mama endured bringing me into the world.

—Thomas L. Tyler

ENCHILADA CASSEROLE

Serves 12

2 lbs. fresh hamburger

1 medium onion, chopped

1 15 oz. can enchilada sauce

5 8 oz. cans tomato sauce (or two 15 oz. cans crushed tomatoes)

Approximately 24 6-inch corn tortillas

One pound grated cheddar cheese (for filling and top)

9x13 cake pan

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Place hamburger and onion in a very large saucepan or Dutch oven. Cook through. Add salt to taste. Add enchilada sauce and tomato sauce (or crushed tomatoes). Bring to a simmer.

With tongs, dip one corn tortilla into hot tomato sauce to soften, approximately 10 to 15 seconds. (Note, my mother used to heat the tortillas briefly in hot corn oil to cook and soften before dipping into the tomato sauce—I skip this step in order to lower the calorie and fat content.)

Place the tortilla into the cake pan. Add 3 heaping tablespoons of cooked hamburger in a line across the center of the tortilla. Sprinkle grated cheddar cheese across the meat and fold the sides of the tortilla into a roll.

Repeat with the rest of the tortillas, using the same process. Pour remaining tomato sauce/ground beef mixture over enchiladas. Top the completed enchiladas with remaining grated cheese.

Bake for 30 minutes, until cheese browns slightly and bubbles. Serve hot.

Have a heritage recipe and story you'd like us to consider for publication in *Ancestry Magazine*? Send the pair to editor@ancestrymagazine.com. Published stories/recipes earn \$100.

RESCUING AN OLD ALBUM

For some branches of your family tree, old photos may be all you have. But what do you do with an aging photo album that's causing more harm than good to these memories?

Step One—Assess the value. Is the album itself (sans photos) an heirloom? Does it have sentimental value for the owner? If so, you'll want to repair or replace damaged pages. If not, you may want to invest in a new, archival album.

Step Two—Remove photos. Start by carefully removing old photos. Old tacking methods like tape, glue, and sticky-backed pages can be particularly destructive. Jot down any information found on the back of the photos and transfer

it to the new pages thus saving the photos from additional handling when viewers are looking for information.

Step Three—Place photos in archival pages. Adhere photos to the page with supplies specifically labeled "archival." Check with your local camera shop or scrapbook-supply house for options including photo corners and archival adhesives.

And if you run into old photos that you don't think you'll be able to remove without causing damage, your best bet is to call a photo preservation professional for assistance and other storage options.

Source: Kodak.com

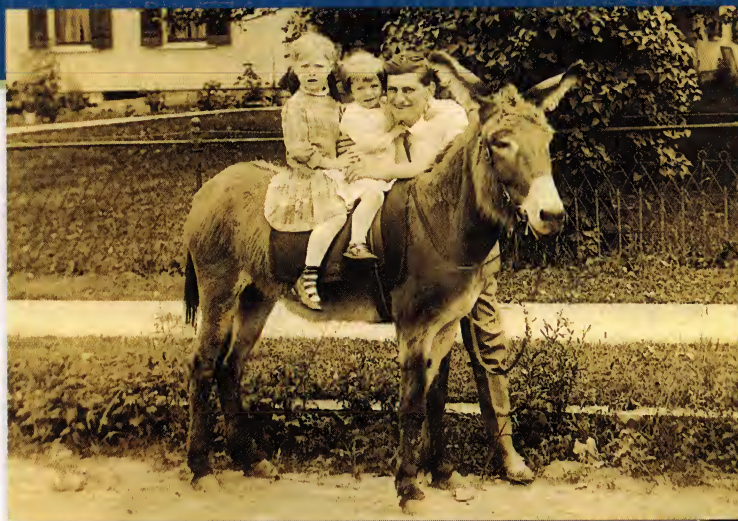


Photo Corner

This is a picture postcard dated October 1911, originally sent to my grandmother's brother. Pictured with the donkey are my mother, Anna Loreen Florka, age six; her younger sister, Ada Florka, age two; and their older brother Charlie Florka, age 18.

The photo was taken at their parents' home in Piqua, Ohio. They lived in town, so I don't think the donkey was theirs. I remember when I was a child, photographers used to come around with ponies to use in photographs. My guess is that someone came around Piqua with a donkey.

This has always been a favorite picture of mine, and I've made copies of it to share with my brother and cousins. It's a picture we all seem to really treasure.



Jane L. Hiser, Piqua, Ohio

Want to see your ancestors featured in *Ancestry Magazine*? Submit your heritage photos to Photo Corner (scanned at 300 DPI, TIFF or JPG)—include your name, contact information, and details about the photo, and e-mail them to <editor@ancestrymagazine.com>. Submissions become the property of *Ancestry Magazine* and will not be returned. You will be contacted if your photo is chosen. Please, no photos of living persons without their written consent.

Should you put the family in storage or keep them handy?

Nothing lasts forever. And even if something did, time would still take its toll, just like it does with our family heirlooms. You've probably run across faded, folded photographs or water-damaged marriage certificates, maybe even Grandma's wedding dress stuffed into a cloth sack. These items might be the only tangible remnants of your ancestors, and preserving them for the future is vital.

But preservation doesn't mean keeping your heirlooms in a cleanroom accessed only by you in a space suit, nor does it require investing a small fortune for a seldom-accessed vault. Peruse the items featured here—from books to scanners to acid-free boxes—and you're bound to discover that family history preservation is well within your reach.

Hit the Books

Once you've uncovered the family treasures in your attic, let digitization and archival storage experts help you preserve your finds. From basic file organization to caring for photographs, *The Organized Family Historian* offers ideas to put your photos, documents, and other heirlooms to good, organized use. Along a similar vein, *Saving Stuff*, written by a senior conservator at the Smithsonian Institute, focuses on protecting a variety of items—from quilts to artwork. If you're ready to go digital, *Digitizing Your Family History* teaches easy methods for choosing and using digital preservation tools: scanners, digital cameras, and software.

The Organized Family Historian: How to File, Manage, and Protect Your Genealogical Research and Heirlooms, by Ann Carter Fleming. Rutledge Hill Press, 2004. Paperback. 304 pages. \$19.99.

Saving Stuff: How to Care for and Preserve Your Collectibles, Heirlooms, and Other Prized Possessions, by Don Williams and Louisa Jaggard. Fireside, 2005. Paperback. 368 pages. \$16.00.

Digitizing Your Family History, by Rhonda R. McClure. Family Tree Books, 2004. Paperback. 188 pages. \$19.99.

Life Preservers

If the thought of preserving your life story makes you anxious, try journal-keeping software such as *LivingTime* or *LifeJournal*. Journal software lets you document your life with photos, movie clips, and personal notes. Features to look for include calendars, time line, and daily journaling options, as well as simple search capabilities so you can quickly find a specific event, date, or event type.

LivingTime by LifeScope <www.livingtime.com> \$39.95.

LifeJournal <www.lifejournal.com> \$39.95.



Family History in a Box

Could it be more aptly named? Box maker I. Waterman has delved into genealogy with its Family History Box. Inside the large Family History Box, you'll find an array of smaller boxes—acid-free and in various shapes and sizes. Also included are archival tissue paper; scrapbook borders; a records folder including pages for family records, medical histories, notes, memos, diaries, time lines, a four-generation family tree, and family milestones; and the family history quiz box.



with Talk-and-Tell and Do-You-Know family quiz cards.

The Family History Box by I. Waterman Box Makers Ltd. <www.memories-nostalgia.com/products.htm> £29.99.

Handle with Care

Keep fingerprints and other oils off of photos and documents by handling them only with gloves. You can get a package of twelve lint-free nylon gloves at <www.pfile.com>, \$14.95.

Desiccant canisters extract moisture from small spaces, boxes, and containers to protect photographs and documents in storage boxes. Available from Archival Methods <www.archivalmethods.com>, \$9.95 to \$15.95.

Safely clean your photographs and documents with a "Magnetic" Dusting Fabric from Preserve-It. Made of chemical- and lint-free Tyvek and nylon fibers, the cloth is non-abrasive. Use it to remove oils, grease, and dust. Available from <www.archivalsuppliers.com>, \$7.10.

Organized Photos

Shoeboxes are fine—for shoes. Treat your photographs to something built for the tasks of storing, protecting, and organizing, like one of the following solutions:

The Deluxe Shoe Box features four print caddies holding up to a total of 1,200 photographs in a shoe-box-size, archival-quality storage box. *Deluxe Shoe Box* by Archival Methods <www.archivalmethods.com>, \$39.65.

Memory Dock's Photo Deck can house one thousand photographs in fifteen photo holders—and the box's side flips down giving you access to your photos, even when other boxes are stacked on top. *Photo Deck* by Memory Dock <www.memorydock.com> \$37.98.



Rubbermaid's plain-jane photo box holds twenty photo envelopes. Made of clear plastic, even when the box is closed you can see what's stored inside. *Photo & Media Storage Box* by Rubbermaid <www.rubbermaid.com>, prices vary.

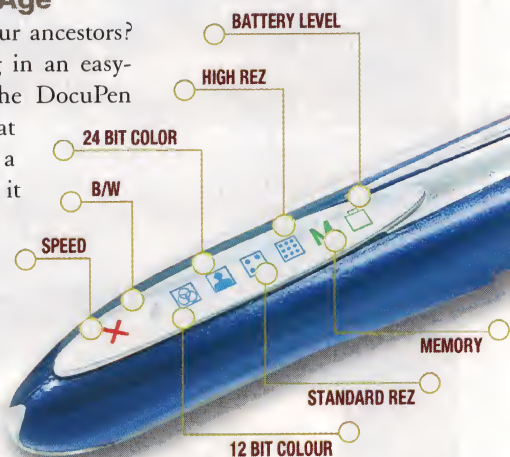
Enter the Digital Age

Ready to digitize your ancestors?

Think about investing in an easy-to-use scanner, like the DocuPen

RC800, a scanner that looks and feels like a pen, so you can carry it anywhere. Use it to scan letters, documents, and pictures in black and white or color, with resolution from 100 to 400 dpi. Many pen-size scanners scan only lines of text, but the DocuPen scans documents at full page and can store hundreds of images, so you don't need instant access to a computer or laptop.

DocuPen by Planon <http://planon.com/docupen_rc800.php> \$299.99.





Attic — yearbooks, souvenirs, postcards, photo albums, medals and awards, toys



Kitchen — recipe files, antiques, china and silver collections, collectibles

Clues!

Colonel Mustard in the billiard room with the lead pipe? Probably not, but when you're hoping to crack a tough family history case, the first stop to look for clues should be right at home.

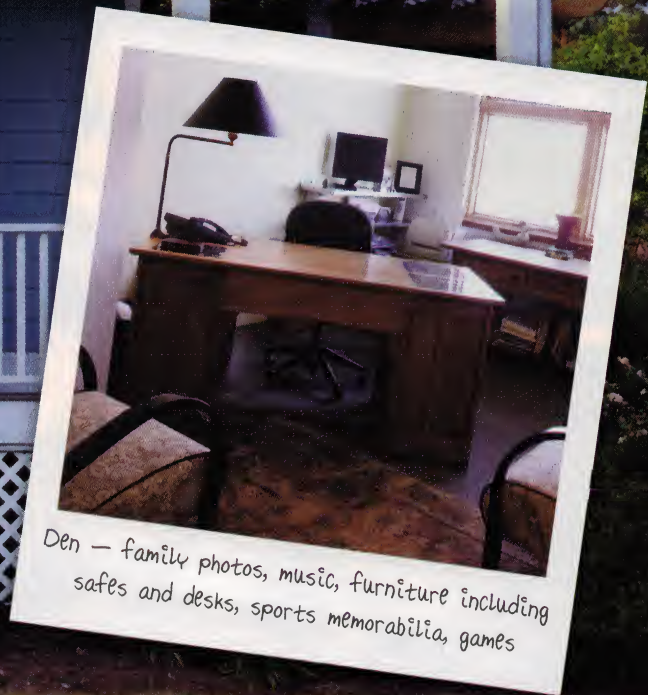
The home offers a wealth of information for family historians—from documents including deeds, wills, birth certificates, passports, and diplomas, to artifacts and memorabilia including school pictures, wedding albums, trunks of vintage clothes, and ticket stubs. These home sources, as they're called, can be lurking almost anywhere. Locating them and understanding how to use home sources can lead you to facts you won't find in the typical vital record.

What should you look for? Over the next few pages, we'll help you figure that out, pointing you to specific types of artifacts you can find in the home and offering you ideas for away-from-home places to search for artifacts you're missing. And we'll wrap everything up by showing you just how practical it can be to organize your collection of home sources in a simple-to-access, easy-to-share digital format.

Even if you don't have a billiard room, library, or conservatory, chances are good that your home (and the homes of your relatives) are brimming with clues. Finding those clues now can help you sort out the mysteries of your family history—and put you way ahead of the game.



Bedroom — quilts, jewelry, vintage clothing, dolls, letters and diaries hidden for safekeeping



Den — family photos, music, furniture including safes and desks, sports memorabilia, games

Inherit



ing a History

By Connie Myers

As we prepared to sell my childhood home, we cleaned out the refrigerator, divvied up the furniture, and called the realtor. We thought we were ready for anything—until we ventured into Mom's genealogy room.

We knew Mom had spent thirty-five years researching family history, but we were unprepared for the sheer volume of records that awaited us. A lateral file and two standard file cabinets were stuffed to overflowing with the results of countless hours of searching through microfilm, books, and cemeteries. A bookshelf sagged under the weight of published family history volumes. Baskets were filled with maps of townships long swallowed up into cities. The very sight took our breath away.

You may be in the same situation. Perhaps your Great Aunt Grace spent a lifetime compiling records, and, now that she's gone, you've inherited her research. It's massive, it's amazing, it's overwhelming. And it's incomprehensible.

So now what? How do you figure out what she's discovered? How do you decipher her organizational methods? How do you make sure her life work remains valued? How can you share the results of her research?

It's a multi-part question with a multi-part answer: evaluate, organize, and computerize. And four experienced genealogists give their advice on where to start.

Evaluate

The first step in dealing with that mountain of research is to evaluate what you have.

Raquel Lindaas has dealt with inherited records both professionally and personally. As a genealogist, she has helped clients sort through all types of inherited family records. Plus she inherited her own treasure trove of family research.

Raquel begins her evaluation process by searching through inherited records to get an idea of what records she has and how they are organized. She also looks for pedigree charts and family group records to guide her through the family lines.

The same ideas can apply to Aunt Grace's records. "Try to figure out what system was used," suggest Stan Lindaas, Raquel's husband and a fellow genealogist. "Are they dividing it up by family? Is there an organizational system there? There's no sense in reinventing the wheel."

Genealogist Debra Marsh says Aunt Grace may have left some simple clues for you to follow. "If she has any group sheets or pedigree charts to serve as your road map, the process becomes very simple," Debra says.

Salt Lake-based Jessica M. Taylor suggests looking for the beginning of the research—usually the record with the most recent event date. “You have to figure out where [the research] starts,” she says. “I would get out the basic pedigree chart, find the most recent date, and work back from that.”

Old research may look a little different than what you’re used to. Long horizontal forms were the standard for decades. Research notations may be difficult to decipher; you may even need a family history librarian to help you decode a research reference like F.6 part 250.

“Look for any Bible references, letters, obituaries, references to churches, certificates, general announcements, and pictures—especially if they have an identifying mark on the back of where they were taken,” Stan suggests. “Everything would be a treasure to me. It’s kind of an adventure.”

Also realize that Aunt Grace may have found information that was never recorded on family forms. “The old family group sheets didn’t give any place to record the death place or the marriage place, so that information is sort of lost in the transfer,” says Jessica. Event locations may be included on original certificates, and if Aunt Grace has recorded the dates on her forms, there’s a good chance she has a copy of the certificate in her research file.

If Aunt Grace entered the computer age and has research results in a computer file, you are light years ahead. A good first step is to print out all of her genealogy information from her computer before you try a data transfer.

Data transfers present their own problems. Data may have been entered into a computer program that is now outdated, or information may have been stored on discs that are unreadable by computers today. For software problems, Stan recommends contacting the company that made the program. “A lot of times they’ll have conversion software,” he says, “but you may have to upgrade incrementally.” Debra recommends trying a local Family History Center as well.

And before you accept the inherited research as fact, do some spot-checking. An overview of the research should help determine if it’s accurate. “I would look for anything

that doesn’t make sense—maybe a woman getting married when she was twelve, or a child born before its mother, or people living in Utah in 1820,” Jessica says. “Right off the bat that can tell you how accurate it is.” Even if the records look good at first glance, you should still do some spot-checking.

Organize: The Paper Trail

Taking inherited records and making them your own means putting the giant stack of documents—photos, birth certificates, family Bibles, deeds—together in a fashion that makes sense to you. For Raquel, the process involved a bedroom floor littered with stacks of old papers sorted into piles by surname.

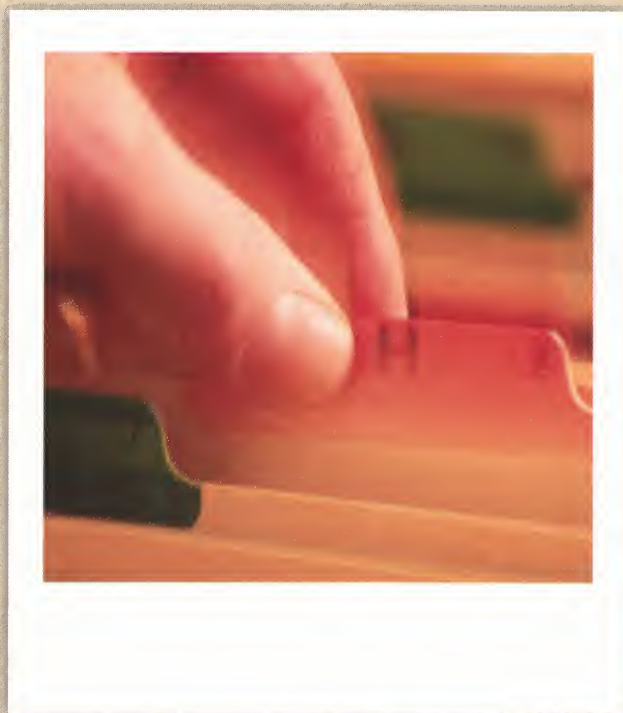
As she worked with each page, Raquel gained a feel for the way the families and the research fit together. She sub-sorted each of the surname piles by document type—census, vital, land, probate, military, Bible, and correspondence—organizing each of these categories by date.

Raquel then placed each surname stack in its own labeled, indexed binder that she can haul around with her if she needs to. “A binder keeps things organized. Most people are very tactile and visual,” she says. “Sometimes I want to have two documents side by side.”

But Raquel admits that with all of this paper, there are bound to be problems. As a professional, she has seen more than her share of research clients shuffling through disorganized, loose papers, even as the meter is running. Plus, paper is fragile, and if something happens to a document, it’s good to have a digital backup.

There’s also a problem with bulk and the need for duplicate records. Say Smith married Jones—which surname does the marriage certificate get filed under? Or are copies made so it can be filed under both?

Debra solves this problem by assigning a numbering method to all of her files—inherited or not. She numbers every document, using stickers when necessary, keeping all of the documents together in a single, safe location. She notes document numbers on computerized pedigree charts



If Aunt Grace entered the computer age and has research results in a computer file, you are light years ahead.

and family group sheets. This way, Debra can reference a single document several times without making duplicates. She can also quickly determine exactly which piece of paper she wants to find as well as where she'll find it.

Paperless record storage has other advantages, as well. Instead of filling file cabinets with mountains of research, documents can be scanned and their electronic images can be stored on CDs or DVDs. A scanned birth certificate or family photo can be quickly e-mailed to other interested family members. At the same time, original documents can be boxed up for off-site storage.

Scanned images can also be linked to records on a home computer or a Web page. A document management program, like *Clooz* <www.clooz.com> or *Paper Tiger* <www.thepapertiger.com>, allows searching via keywords or personal filing codes, enabling quick retrieval of electronic files.

Debra now scans all of her personal history records as

a safety precaution. "I scan them in. I back them up to an external hard drive separate from my computer. Then I back them up online," she says. The only paper documents she keeps now are originals—not copies.

Computerizing Results

Regardless of how you choose to maintain Aunt Grace's records, there's still the matter of what to do with her results: family group sheets and pedigree charts. Chances are good that Aunt Grace relied solely on paper. But, if your goal is to actually use and share her information, today these findings need to be compiled on a computer.

Computer programs like *Family Tree Maker* 2006 or *Personal Ancestral File* (PAF) can help you organize Aunt Grace's work into an understandable and usable format. "You scan a document in once, then link it to as many people as you want," says Debra, who also notes that, depending on the software, you may be able to quickly upload a family tree to a website or create a personal Web page based on your research.

The best time to computerize may be while you're organizing inherited documents. First, enter the information from those hand-printed pedigree charts and family group sheets into your software program. Next, choose one of Aunt Grace's documents and find where it fits on the chart. Enter the document information into the appropriate "Notes" section of the chart and create new family group sheets as needed. Third, label or scan the document. Fourth, link the document to the pedigree charts or family group sheets using your chosen organizational method: a binder name, numbered document label, or a clickable link to the scanned image. Finally, file the document.

Whatever route you choose, once the information is compiled, don't just keep it to yourself. "Submit it to the LDS Church or Ancestry.com so other people can access it," Jessica says. "There are people out there who are searching for this genealogy. Make that information available." ♪

Connie Myers is a freelance writer and frequent contributor to Ancestry Magazine.

So what should you do with Aunt Grace's records when you have no interest in her research and no room to store it? Genealogist Stan Lindaas recommends asking family first. "Call around and ask cousins and second cousins," he says.

If your cousins don't jump at the opportunity, consider an online giveaway. Go to RootsWeb (www.rootsweb.com) and find a surname prevalent in Aunt Grace's research. "Post a message and say, 'I have this research—will someone pay the shipping costs?'" says Jessica Taylor. "Or go to the phone book and start calling others with an unusual surname."

Local historical societies or genealogy organizations may also be interested in Aunt Grace's records. As a bonus, donations to societies or libraries are often tax deductible. Also consider the scrapbook value of Aunt Grace's collection. When properly displayed, those photos and letters may fascinate your children and grandchildren.



Home sources away from Home

By Anastasia Sutherland Tyler

For years, my parents displayed a shiny mound of glass in their living room—three glass whiskey bottles, melted together, to be exact.

The bottles weren't always a single entity—they fused one hundred years ago as a result of the fires that followed the 1906 San Francisco earthquake.

The morning of the earthquake, my great-grandmother awakened to rumbling and ran downstairs to join her parents cowering in a doorway. Those three bottles, plus a few panoramic photos of the city on fire and in ruins, and my memories of my great-grandmother recounting the event have always helped me connect her to the earthquake.

That is until I called my parents to ask where those bottles were.

"We sold them on eBay," my mother replied.

In a mode of life simplification, my parents sold these items for eight bucks. I can't blame my parents. I hate clutter and love getting rid of extra stuff. But I would have taken those bottles off their hands—and I would have given them ten dollars at least.

One person's clutter is another person's treasure—a fortunate fact that, when coupled with auctions, swap meets,

and a few well-meaning online resources, allows those of us without attics full of family history to still get our hands on family artifacts.

While you may not find something that actually belonged to your ancestors, using your imagination, you can find items in almost any of these locations that will enrich your family history and become a family treasure.

online auctions

Online auctions, such as eBay <www.ebay.com>, Yahoo! Auctions <<http://auctions.yahoo.com>>, AuctionFire <www.auctionfire.com>, or Amazon auctions <<http://auctions.amazon.com>> are easy places to begin your out-of-home search for family artifacts. What will you find? Just about anything you can imagine: toys, vacation memorabilia, journals, diaries, photos and photo albums, tools, clothes, magazines, books, and art. Search by a surname. Too many results? Add a key word unique to your family. Look for an object specific to your ancestor's hometown or time period. I searched on "Sutherland" (my maiden name) and "tartan" (Sutherland is a clan in Scotland) and found kilts, postcards, and paintings.

gimme a "Y"

Yearbooks are great family history sources, helping to place an individual in a particular time and place.

Most yearbooks are photo-heavy, giving you the opportunity to see what Grandpa looked like as a high school freshman—and compare him to the rest of the class. Listings of clubs, sports teams, and student government can help you determine an ancestor's interests, hobbies, and talents. You might even find your grandmother's siblings in the same yearbook as well as reports of events in the town, county, or state. Use the information you find to

locate former classmates, neighbors, cousins, and friends, to help you piece together what life was like during your ancestor's formative years.

Get a head start on your search in the newly launched Ancestry.com yearbook collection—the largest of its kind. In the collection, available through Directories & Member Lists on the Ancestry.com Search tab, you'll find middle school, junior high, and high school yearbooks from across the United States. You can browse through the nearly 1,500 U.S. yearbooks, years 1910 to 1977.



local auctions

Whether at home or traveling, you may want to check out local off-line auctions. People auction off antique furniture, dolls, serving sets, art, as well as other items. To find a local auction, enter the city and keywords like "antique auction" in a Web search engine.

Antique malls and swap meets

Walking through the aisles of an antique mall can be a journey down memory lane. There's more than just old furniture to be found. My own jaunts through antique malls or swap meets jog too many memories to count. Perhaps you'll find pink glass dishes identical to your grandmother's or the old-time juicer that your great-grandmother used to make that perfect lemonade. Visit a swap meet near your ancestor's hometown and you may find school memorabilia, old newspapers, even class photos. Toys, clothing, quilts, paintings, books, plates, coins, stamps, and many more treasures are just waiting to be discovered.

online databases

You can find family artifacts in online databases as well. At Ancestry.com you can download scans of panoramic photos, postcards, baseball cards, Civil War photos, ships photographs, yearbooks, and family histories. The Library of Congress American Memory project <<http://memory.loc.gov>> features maps, documents, advertisements, and images from America's history. You may even want to try to find lost family photos in a database like Dead Fred <www.deadfred.com> that specializes in reuniting photos and families.

You may never find exactly what you're looking for, but you could come pretty close. And the next time you're tempted to simplify (yes, Mom, you), remember that the junk in your own attic might be the treasure someone like me is hunting. ☺



challenge buying your family history online

What happened when we asked staffers at *Ancestry Magazine* to find their family history on eBay?

In just a few minutes, contributing editor Tana Pedersen Lord was able to find two family-related artifacts. "I have two great-great-grandfathers who fought in the Civil War," says Lord. "I found a collection of buttons from Civil War uniforms that would make an interesting collage. Also, my maternal great-great-grandparents came from Germany and settled in Pennsylvania. I love some of the crafts from that time period and think having a fraktur would be nice."

Here are some of our other finds:

Michael Sherrod, publisher

Photo of Teddy Roosevelt's Rough Riders in which my great-granduncle was a member.



Lou Szucs, executive editor

Photos and postcards, including a postcard of Main Street in Boise, Idaho, 1910 showing people going to the silver mine, which might explain why my grandfather George, a jeweler, went there.

Myra Vanderpool Gormley, contributor

My maternal grandparents married 15 October 1899. While I doubt that my Indian Territory pioneer granny ever owned a cookbook, it's fun to see what was on the menu at the turn of the twentieth century in *Wrisley's Universal Cookbook: a Book of Recipes Invaluable to the Household*, published in 1899.

Rachel Kilbourne, intern

The published journal of my great-great-grandfather, Thomas Bullock. The one I found isn't rare or anything, but it was interesting to see.

Marilyn Carlson, contributor

A picture postcard of the actual church in which most of my Bornholm ancestors worshipped.

Jeanie Croasmun, senior editor

A souvenir Cedar Point plate identical to the one my grandmother would serve me breakfast on whenever I stayed at her house as a kid.

Paint by Letters

by Jenny Kaufman

*Sometimes life can seem so black-and-white . . . until
a forgotten stack of love letters fills it with color.*

Cindy Pringle, a forty-seven-year-old photographer, lived with her grandparents for much of her childhood in the big square house that her grandfather's grandfather built in Paxton, Illinois. So, after her grandmother Edna died in 1997, it seemed only natural that Pringle would help ready the place for sale.

It was while she was sorting through memories that she stumbled up on it—a stack of musty old papers wrapped in a blue, silk necktie.

Unwrapping them, Pringle realized they were long-forgotten love letters from her late grandfather Elmer to his then future-wife, Edna.

Pringle savored the letters, discovering details of her grandparents' lives she would have never known otherwise. She learned that Elmer struggled through the winter of 1928 in Chicago, trying to earn money sell-

ing vacuum cleaners while Edna was back in Buckley, Illinois, teaching at a country school. Pringle relished every word but she couldn't help thinking she had only half of the story—her grandfather's side—and wishing all along that she could read her grandmother's responses as well.

Eventually, the Paxton home was sold, and the new owners began a renovation. During the process, a grimy stack of envelopes was unearthed inside the upstairs bathroom wall—Edna's responses, the missing half of the correspondence, stashed away for safekeeping by Elmer years before.

Past Unrealized

Pringle never guessed what a different picture a few words could paint of a couple. But as she read the complete set of letters, she realized how much she had missed of her grandparents' lives. "In my vision before, Grandma and Grandpa were an elderly couple," Pringle says. After reading the letters, she says, "I saw them like a different couple almost."

Elmer wrote of finding Edna's anklet in his Model T and his worries that the car would have flat tires and a dead battery by the time he came home from Chicago for a visit. Edna offered tongue-in-cheek sales pitches to help boost Elmer's career: "I am concerned with giving the American housewife more leisure—to emancipate her from the laborious and unsanitary hand broom—so she may devote more time to civic matters, petitions and such. I have shown countless thousands how the vacuum cleaner may be used to pull the stubborn shoelace from the listless eyelet; to remove the tenacious sock and retrieve the elusive collar button."





Speaking in Letters

What can you learn from the correspondence of an ancestor? According to genealogist Laura Prescott, “the best things are tales about family, references to siblings, uncles, aunts—even friends of the family you wouldn’t hear about [in official records]. You learn about the rest of the family members and understand them through the eyes of a person back then.”

If you’re not lucky enough to find letters on a closet shelf, don’t give up hope. Prescott says you may also want to look in a few of the following places:

- *College archives and special collections.* Many people leave their personal correspondence to academic libraries. As Prescott points out, “College is an important four years of your life. People have a real affinity for their college.”
- *Local or regional libraries with a mission to preserve records of their area.*
- *Regional or state historical societies.*
- *Ethnic associations.*
- *Manuscript catalogs online.* The National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections (NUCMC) at the Library of Congress (www.loc.gov/coll/nucmc/nucmc.html) includes listings from a number of archives. Keep in mind that not all archives send their listings to NUCMC; you may have to search some catalogs directly.

Old Words, New Plans

Genealogist Laura Prescott says it’s rare to find both halves of a correspondence, and even stumbling upon just one set of letters can be fascinating. “It’s almost like watching a soap opera,” she says, “watching a person’s events unfold.”

Prescott points out that much of the excitement people feel about their family history is “find[ing] ourselves in our ancestors. We are part of them.” This fact, she says, really hits home when you have the rare opportunity to read that an ancestor had the same thoughts and feelings that you have.

Those mutual sentiments are what drove Pringle to find a way to share the letters. Her initial thought was to compile them into a small book to distribute to family members. But Pringle’s sister-in-law instead suggested the addition of other material—pictures from family members and vintage photos, including some from the online archives of the Chicago Historical Society. Pringle created a historic setting for the book by dropping in recipes, drawings, and ads from the period as well.

Together with her husband Kirby, a newspaper reporter, Pringle built a manuscript of forty-three letters and seventy-four illustrations titled *See You in My Dreams: Love Letters of a Country Teacher and the Eureka Man*. Their goal is to publish the book and distribute it to family members and interested local historical organizations.

Former Friends and Strangers

“Just the fact that [the letters] were discovered is a miracle,” says Pringle. “It seems like a gift, and I just want to share it. It’s a wonderful picture of romance and love at that time.”

Pringle wasn’t the only person affected by the letters. “When I would read excerpts to [husband] Kirby,” she says, “he would see how similar my personality is to [my grandmother’s].” And when an area newspaper ran a story on Pringle’s book and printed a photo of the class Edna taught, one of Edna’s former students wrote Pringle in response, noting that she could still remember the tan dress with brown velvet trim that Edna wore on picture day.

Timeless Travel

Most of us don’t think too much about the parts of our daily lives we’re leaving as artifacts—if we did, we’d probably spell better in e-mail. But when we happen upon a forgotten batch of love letters written by our grandparents or great-grandparents, we learn that a kiss is still a kiss, and that a single, simple sentiment can linger for an eternity.

The project, says Pringle, has been nothing short of a joy. Sure, she admits, sometimes as she reads the letters, she misses her grandparents more than ever, and she realizes just how many questions she will never have the opportunity to ask. But, she says, the mere act of poring over her ancestors’ words also has a positive side—it inspires her to learn more about them. “And it makes you wish time travel were truly possible,” says Pringle. ☞

Originally from central Illinois, Jennie Kaufman is a writer and editor in Brooklyn, New York.

FINDING *the Family* IN COURT

by Sheldon H. Laskin



If your ancestors ever went to court—and through business dealings, criminal cases, and civil suits, there's a good chance they did—happening upon the record of a case while searching through the attic can be a boon for your family history. Who knows, you may even luck into a story that was formerly unknown to any living member of your family.

Unfortunately, not every family keeps copies of court proceedings at the house. And searching randomly on the hope of discovering a legal decision associated with an ancestor can be a daunting task. But with the Internet and legal databases like Westlaw and Lexis/Nexis, it's possible to quickly and simply find appellate court opinions without any prior knowledge of a case.

That's the way I discovered *Laskin v. Bercow*, a commercial dispute involving a dry cleaning business owned by my two granduncles, Samuel and Larry Laskin. Here's how I did it and how you can, too.

LexisNexis® Total Research System

My Lexis™ Search Research Tasks Search Advisor Get a Document Shepard's® Alerts

Sources Guided Search Forms Command Searching

All Guided Search Forms > States Legal

States Legal

* Terms: Laskin

Source: New York Federal & State Cases

Date: ☒ No Date Restrictions ☐ From To

* Entry Required

Key:

Step 1. Locate appropriate database and formulate search.

I knew my Laskin relatives settled in Brooklyn in 1906. So, from Lexis/Nexis [see "Accessing Legal Databases" (*next page*) for more information], I selected the "States Legal" database and limited the source cases to "New York Federal & State Cases." I wanted to cast my net as wide as possible, so I requested anything containing the surname Laskin.

Step 2. Examine search results for clues.

My search returned 120 hits for "Laskin" and I scanned each for clues about the associated case. The appellants in the 1937 *Laskin v. Bercow* case had the same names as my granduncles Samuel and Larry Laskin.

Step 3. Examine the decision.

The brief decision included in the Nexis/Lexis database for *Laskin v. Bercow* provided one key fact—the Laskins had purchased a cleaning business. My cousin (actually first cousin once removed) Jack, Larry's son, was able to confirm that Samuel and Larry were in the dry cleaning business.

Step 4. Obtain the index.

Still, the only way I was going to know for sure that this case involved my family was to examine the case record itself—something I would have to order. I contacted the New York State Archives and learned that the record for this case was maintained by the New York State Library (NYSL) who wanted \$130 for the 130 page document—an amount I was unwilling to pay without being positive that the case involved my family.

Mission: Accessible

by Kurt Laird

Your mission, should you choose to accept it, is to make your family history accessible. Papers, artifacts, answers, and memories available instantly, at the touch of just a couple of computer buttons.

It was an interesting concept, digitizing someone's family history, turning their mountains of mementos, closets of clutter, and family files filled with facts into a personal digital archive. Quite honestly, it was a task none of us at *Ancestry Magazine* was confident could be tackled easily.

It wasn't the dirty work we feared—we had already lined up a company that specializes in digitizing personal records. It was the willing participant we needed. Someone who started family history research back in the dark ages, before computerized searches were the norm. Someone whose one-of-a-kind papers were yellowing, whose files were stashed in creative corners of a cabinet long forgotten. Someone who could set fears aside and willingly let a team of scanners go where no digital access had ventured before.

Bluntly, we needed a guinea pig.

The Prospect

In walked Marilyn Carlson, a former professional genealogist who has been researching her own family history for decades. "I started doing research in the 70s," she tells us, "and pages that I copied off of microfilms are all yellowed and have started to fade." She admittedly has cabinets full of documents, and, unlike other potential subjects we approached, she didn't turn tail and run at the mention of strangers picking through her house. A little more prodding and Marilyn actually feigned excitement over the prospect. We had our subject.

We had our own motivation for wanting to see someone digitized. First and foremost, it's the way of the future, or, as some people may argue, the present. Music, photography, vital records, and statistics—very little of today's family history isn't either already digital or about to be.

Experience has taught us how much more convenient it is to access a census record, a passenger list, or a draft registration card from our home computers, and how much more likely our own relatives were to get a current picture of the kids since the advent of e-mail and digital photos. What we really wanted to show was that you didn't have to be a big player or someone with a lot of time and electronic toys in order to take all of your family history records digital. And that you could bring in a company like the one we chose to work with, Acentra <www.acentra.com>, and let them take control of the project while you sit back and reap the rewards.

The Preparation

Acentra's president Matt Bills told us what they would do. "We go into people's homes and digitize their lives. We sit in their living rooms and leverage all the technology we have, making it as human as possible," he said. They could handle just about anything—paperwork, photos, a wedding dress, even old farm implements. And the result would be a conveniently accessible collection of all types of records, indexed for fast access.

Technicians from Acentra made an initial visit to Marilyn's home to preview the items that would be digitized and to assess the equipment that they would need for the job. They would be digitizing photos, Super 8s, spiral-bound family histories, and folders full of genealogy research and papers. We also asked Marilyn to be intentionally difficult, stocking her home with odds-and-ends, including a one-of-a-kind historic map of Vendyssel, Denmark, and a bucket, shovel, and hoe that had belonged to her great-grandfather.

During their initial visit, the techs instructed Marilyn on how to prepare for the next visit. She would need to remove photos from albums and paperclips and staples from documents. Before each session, Marilyn would need to sort out stacks of material to be digitized, and, during the digitizing process, she would be expected to be available to answer any questions the technicians had. Other than that, she was finished.

The Project

How many technicians does it take to digitize a genealogist? Three. One to handle the documents or photos, one to put the items through a scanner, and the third to label each item according to the owner's, Marilyn's, instructions.

During a digitizing session, each of which lasted approximately two hours, the techs set up their equipment: usually a scanner and a laptop computer, although certain types of memorabilia like the wedding dress and the farm implements would require a camera and special storage arrangements, and home movies would have to be turned to DVD off-site.

Aside from the clutter Marilyn endured during the project—stacks of documents and photos were scattered on almost every available surface in her home for a few weeks as she determined what would and wouldn't be digitized—Marilyn admits that overall, the process was sort of entertaining.

"At first you're awkward with people you've never met, but [the techs] were all courteous and interesting," she says. "It was fun to have them there. They were more interested in my family history than my *own* family [was]. And that made it fun."

The Product

Marilyn assuaged our fears about granting a stranger snooping-rights into a person's life. "I didn't feel like it was at all invasive," she says. "I felt like [the techs] were very professional. They were interesting to have around."

She may, however, be unique in her cavalier attitude. Says Bills, his company has had to develop ways of working around the natural fear people have regarding intrusions into their personal lives. "If someone is really privacy-conscious," he says, "we can cover the record with a sheet of paper while it is being digitized so that we do not see something like an old bank statement." It's an understandable concern, he says, and for his company, it's a hurdle that's never too tough.

Surprisingly, though, privacy isn't the biggest cause of apprehension Bills's company sees—instead, it's the crippling fear some people have of getting organized.





"Paralysis," he says, "is the most common concern. People get paralysis thinking that they have to organize everything before they [digitize]. You don't need to organize before. It is so much easier to organize after [the family history] has been digitized."

The Prescription

Even if you never have a need to drop your family history in your purse, backpack, or pocket, it's nice to know that if you really wanted to, you could. But it's even nicer to know that every document, photo, oral history, vital record, or school picture you own can be quickly copied and shared over and over again. It's comforting to think that your hard work and history is safely stashed away in as many locations as you'd like. And that with just the touch of a few buttons you can easily find almost any tidbit of family history you're looking for.

Today, instead of searching through file folders, Marilyn, for all her effort, can drop a DVD into her computer and retrieve whatever she wants simply by inputting search terms: her personal archive has been professionally sorted and indexed. And while she hasn't done it yet, she can attach any of these unique-to-her-family records to the appropriate person or persons on an electronic family tree, making every bit of her work that much more accessible.

But is Marilyn glad we prodded her into accepting our mission? Absolutely. "The value of having done this is priceless," she says. "Even my family was excited about this. I've never seen them so excited about [family history] before." ❧

Kurt Laird is a Utah-based freelance writer.

Recommendations

Thinking about having your research digitized? Try the following recommendations, courtesy of Marilyn Carlson, our guinea pig:

Demonstrate on your computer.

Have technicians show you samples and how to open files on your system, not theirs, before you agree to the project. You'll get a better idea of what you're in for.

Take your time.

Think through the process as you assess your collection. You'll be less apt to make haphazard decisions that leave your house in shambles and more likely to get what you want.

Use naming systems that you're comfortable with.

Find out how the technicians are planning to save documents and be sure you're comfortable with the naming system. If not, create one yourself. Remember, it's your money—get something you can use.

Ask questions.

Find out file type options and the benefits and drawbacks of each. For example, jpegs are smaller files but they degrade each time they're re-named or re-saved. And voice your wants. Do you need only the front of photos or do you want the backs, too? Be very specific.

Get the results of the last session before scheduling the next one.

If you find something you don't like, say a process or a naming convention, it will save valuable time if you catch it early.

Look over shoulders.

Intimidating? Not really. And there's no time like the present to clear up any miscommunications between you and the technicians.

Learn the right way to communicate.

If there's anything I learned through this project, it's that when you really want to communicate with someone born after 1970, you have to send them an e-mail or a text message.

If you can't afford to have everything scanned, do the most important things.

Or consider having your progeny help you with a do-it-yourself project. The more time the kids and grandkids spend with your collection, the more likely they are to develop an interest in it.

My Life as a Guinea Pig

by Marilyn Carlson

It's never fun being a guinea pig.

What I experienced in the last three weeks would normally be spread out over seven to eight months. I do not recommend the course I took. It was messy.

When *Ancestry Magazine* approached me with the idea of being digitized, I was hit by a mix of emotions. First and foremost, did I really need to be digitized? Was there something wrong with my current storage solution (boxes and files full of papers, miscellaneous packed-away artifacts, photos in albums)? What kind of commitment would I have to make for the project to be a success—an hour, a day, a lifetime? Would anyone other than me ever really care if my records were digitized? Would the magazine continue to call me their guinea pig?

I decided the only way I would find these answers was to take the project. I started by putting my audience first—the people I thought would one day benefit from my digitizing. I already knew where everything I needed was, and I understood how to work with my personal organization system. My family would probably want documents that were very easy to access. Their attitude about family history differs slightly from mine—they agree that it is valuable. They just tack on the words “not today.”

I also liked the idea of throwing in some challenges—my under-exposed and distressed microfilm copy of a Danish probate from 1689; a similar probate, but with half of the image in focus, the other half out of focus; a printout from a Danish website of family history titles and authors, with the extra diacritics—to test the OCR (the program says it handles Dutch, Spanish, French, and German—let's see what it thinks of Danish); Super 8 movies taken in the 1940s and 1950s; and slides from the same era.

I started by organizing all of my photos into 2½-inch-

high stacks, each of which would equate to approximately two hours work for the digitizers. I gathered papers, sifted through artifacts and mementos, and decided what was and wasn't worth digitizing. After I was finished, my small house was in shambles.

Then the techs arrived and the project got underway. Over the course of the digitizing, I realized that a lot of good came from my effort and theirs. First, my photos are now labeled with at least educated guesses of people and years. As for the OCR and the indexing, they're

not quite done yet so I'm still waiting to see whether I can finally read the name of my sixth great-aunt in the 1689 probate.

My family came together for this project, and no one had to die for it to happen. A couple of my uncles volunteered collections that no one else was aware of. One of my sisters found items in a stack of Mom's stuff that even Mom didn't know about. Future generations of my family—kids and grandkids—got involved, and as they are more technologically driven than I am, they're probably more apt to stay involved. These factors alone

made the project worth it. But there's more.

Thus far, the results that I've seen from the project have made me very happy. For example, I gave Acentra an extremely faded photograph—no faces were recognizable. After they worked on it for a few minutes, I could see and finally name every person in the photo, and I could date it at about 1942. Also, it was much better having technicians come to my house rather than taking my collection somewhere, trusting that someone would handle my treasures in a manner I'd be okay with. I was part of this process. And if I chose to, I could watch over absolutely everything the technicians did. Guinea pig or not, it was worth the effort, despite the temporary shambles of my home.



TREASURES IN PUBLIC ATTICS

by Curt B. Witcher, MLS, FUGA



How many times have you been delighted at the discovery of a trunk full of family heirlooms? How many times has a cousin presented you with a bundle of letters or a previously unknown photo album found in an attic full of old things?

For each of those wonderful moments of discovery, there are, unfortunately, so many other times we lament that nothing more is available than a vital or census record.

Increasingly, however, personal trunks, albums, and scrapbooks filled with family information are finding their ways to local public libraries and historical societies. For the family historian, this means these institutions' offerings are becoming increasingly more important to explore—particularly when personal collections are available electronically.

The Northwest Room of the Everett Public Library in Everett, Washington, for example, houses a special collection that includes maps, pamphlets, oral histories, and photographs of Everett and Snohomish Counties. The library sports seven digital collections <www.epls.org/nw/digital_collections.htm> holding hundreds of images of people, places, and events.

The Alliance Memory Project of the Rodman Public Library in Alliance, Ohio, provides photographic images of the area, oral history recordings and transcripts, and digital copies of videotaped interviews with local World War II veterans. Where they lived, what they did, and how they felt can all be found at <www.alliancememory.org>.

Disappointed that your grandmother's shoebox of newspaper obituaries wasn't saved? If your research nears Garrett, Indiana, the Garrett Public Library has an online obituary index <<http://obit.gpl.lib.in.us>> that includes images of the actual obituaries. Immediately after locating a

person in the index, you can discover the names of the survivors, employment, cemetery locations, and any number of other valuable bits of information right in the obituary.

These are just three examples—a little searching, and you'll discover plenty more. Finding these types of collections can be as simple as using a search engine to locate local libraries. Or check state library websites for links to the public libraries within the state.

But don't stop at libraries. Look for online collections of area historical societies. For example, the Itawamba County Historical Society in Mississippi <www.rootsweb.com/~msichs> not only collects and publishes documents about county events and organizations, it also makes a great effort to preserve and present artifacts that were woven through the lives of the county's previous generations. Visitors to the society's website can view a research map of the county or search for more information about past county residents, their activities, and their families.

Another great historical society online collection belongs to the Hometown (Indiana) Historical Society <www.hometownhistoricalsoc.org>, which provides a community photo album on its website along with transcribed data from numerous newspapers and historical publications.

In nearly every community, the local public library or historical society offers trunks of treasures, scrapbooks, and picture albums—and if you're lucky, you may not have to travel further than your home computer to view the goods. Whether or not your ancestor is featured, these sites are certainly worth a look. ♪

Curt B. Witcher, MLS, FUGA, is the Historical Genealogy Department Manager of the Allen County Public Library.

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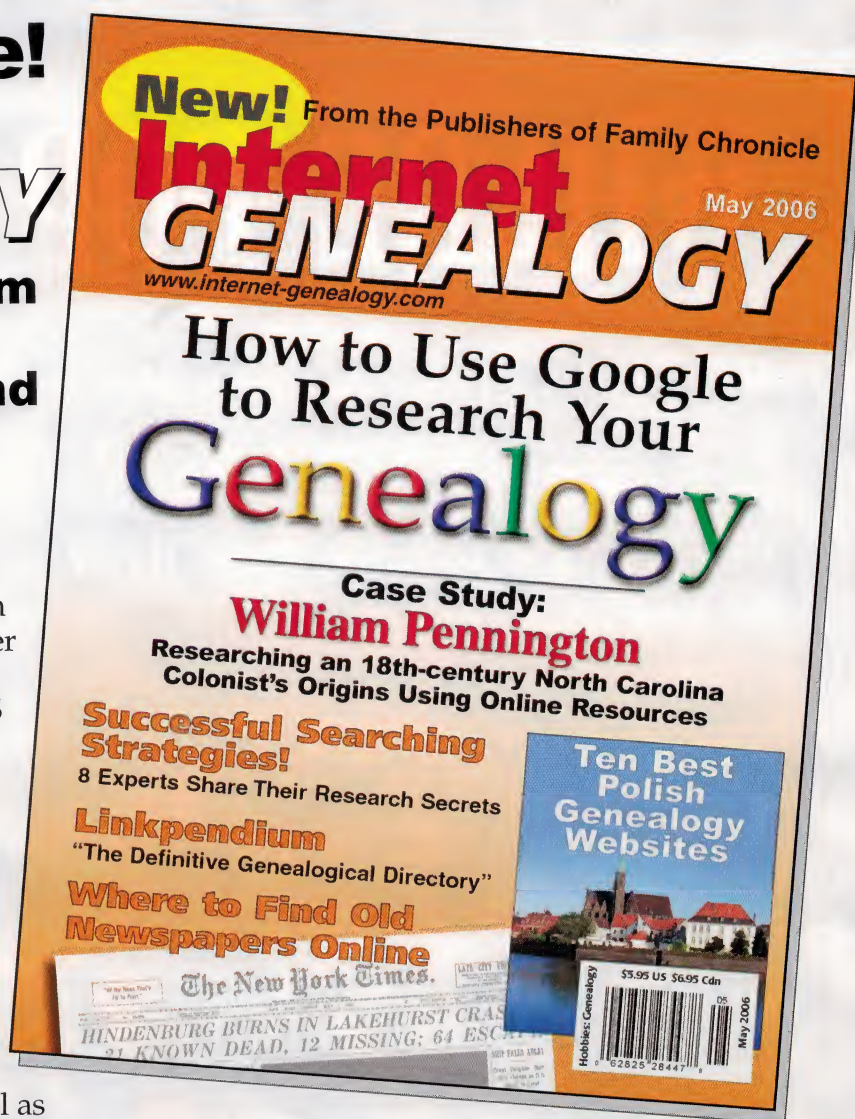
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WHERE POP CULTURE

What makes a perfectly reasonable family shuck indoor plumbing, fast food, and cell phones to live as pioneers in west Texas? The same thing that drives a museum curator to turn Buffalo Soldier and a college student to relive World War I—a desire to immerse themselves in family history.

by Jeanie Croasmun



MEETS GENEALOGY

Lisa Cooke knows firsthand that there's some good in television. Just a year ago, her family may not have whole-heartedly agreed.

It was at about that time that they were tossed into the desolation of west Texas—for the uninitiated, an area straight from an old Western where the desert prairie stretches on, uninterrupted save the occasional cactus or coyote, forever.

"I knew this wasn't going to be a John Ford movie, but come on," Cooke says today, laughing. Whether willingly or out of obligation and necessity, she and her family rapidly became initiated and spent the next three hot, dry, hard months living like pioneers.

The prospect of surviving a summer, solo, in west Texas started months before as Cooke was watching TV. She heard a call for people to apply for a new PBS show, *Texas Ranch House*

(premiering May 2006 on PBS), the next segment in a series of reality programs including *Frontier House* and *1900 House*, that meshes modern mindsets with historical lifestyles. She was immediately intrigued. But Texas?

"At first I thought 'eww, Texas?' It sounded hard," says Cooke. But family history got the best of her—members of her own family had settled in a nearby area in the middle of the nineteenth century. They were some of the hardest family she'd ever attempted to research, and, truth be told, she gave up on them shortly after starting. "The records down South on my ancestors were just so sketchy. It's not an area I concentrated on that much," she says.

But a television show? "I'd been craving something that would add real context to the lives of my ancestors, and there's no other way to do it than to live it," she says. Besides, what were the odds that she'd be picked?

Pretty good, it turns out. Next thing Cooke knew, she

Image: Wyman Meinzer/Thirteen/WNET New York

was asking her husband to take time off work and telling her three teenage daughters—the excited fourteen-year-old, the willing seventeen-year-old, and the reticent nineteen-year-old—that it was time to pack. “Really,” she says, “what else are you going to do this summer?”

REANIMATING LIVES

There’s no monetary prize at the end of *Texas Ranch House*. “You’re not going to win a million dollars,” says Cooke. You do it because you want to understand an ancestor, how life was for the people who shaped your history.

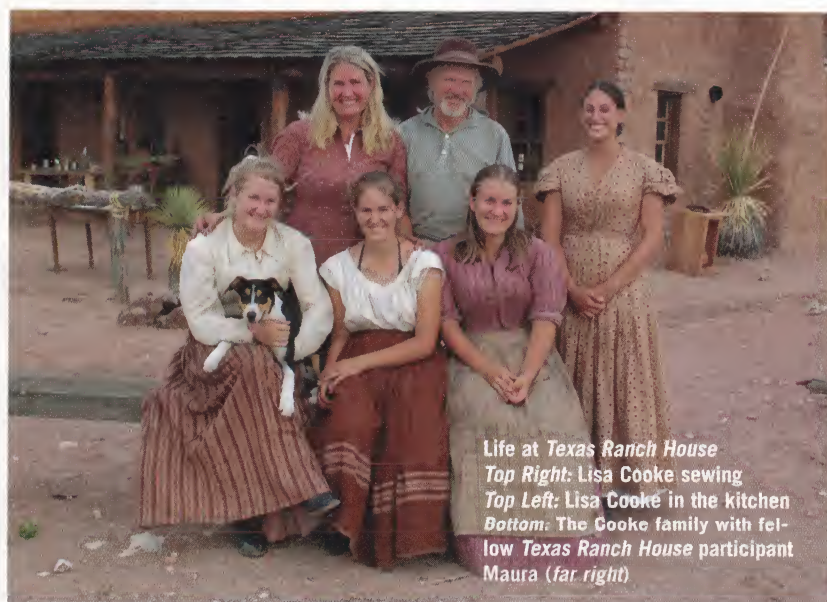
Jenny Thompson, whose study of military reenactors resulted in the book *War Games: Inside the World of Twentieth-Century War Reenactors* (Smithsonian Books, 2004), says it’s that same motivation that pushes almost every reenactor.

“With war reenactors,” says Thompson, “you have an intricate grouping of people coming from all backgrounds. The reenactors who had relatives [who served in the war], who have items or objects that their relatives had, feel closer to those people. They’re kind of honoring their memory. They’re not reenacting as their relative but as a tribute to that person.

“One guy, whose great uncle was in World War I, told stories about this uncle,” says Thompson. “His family history was so important to him. [As a reenactor] he could explore and find out something about his family that made him feel a lot of pride in his stories.”

Texas Tech University’s History Museum Curator Henry B. Crawford spends an occasional weekend as a Buffalo soldier. “It’s fun,” he says. “There is nothing like reliving historic events at places where they actually occurred.”

As a reenactor, Crawford knows how stepping into a single moment of an ancestor’s life can affect someone. “During the filming of the movie



Life at Texas Ranch House
Top Right: Lisa Cooke sewing
Top Left: Lisa Cooke in the kitchen
Bottom: The Cooke family with fellow Texas Ranch House participant Maura (far right)

Images: Weyman Meinzer/Thirteen/WNET New York (top right); Joseph Sinnott/Thirteen/WNET New York (top left, bottom)



Henry Crawford, with wife Robyn, in a traditional Buffalo Soldier uniform

Gettysburg, the scene of Picket's Charge was filmed on the spot where it happened, with permission of the National Park Service," he says. "I have friends who participated in that filming whose ancestors took part in the actual charge. I have heard many stories of reenactors being in tears when the scene was done—it was such a powerful moment for them."

A DIRTY JOB

Even with the cameras rolling, reliving an ancestor's life is anything but glamorous.

Once in Texas, Cooke quickly realized that cameras were secondary to her family's experience. "I didn't go in with this mythology. We'd seen *Frontier House*. I had down-to-earth expectations," she said. She knew it would be tough and gritty. But she admits that at first, she didn't know how anyone would even be able to secure 47,000 vacant, undeveloped acres in Texas—until she saw the land and wondered who would possibly want to live on it.

Generation Following Generation

It's one thing to relive an ancestor's life as a single adult. But what happens when you throw children into the mix?

"It's hard," says Linda Whittaker. She ought to know—nine years ago, she took six of her own children across country in a wagon on the Mormon Trail Wagon Train.

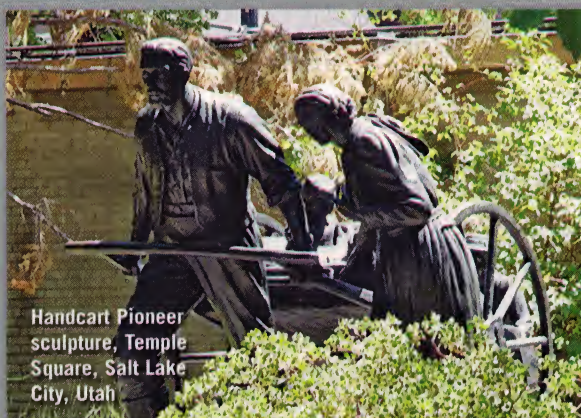
The family, which also includes husband, Tom, forfeited their traditional summer vacation to participate. Says Linda, it was Tom's idea for them to trek across country like his ancestors had.

"We'd always go on these beach vacations," says Linda, "and one day Tom said he wanted to do something different, something our kids were never going to forget."

At the time, the Whittaker children ranged in age from twenty-two down to four. Linda, Tom, and the four-year-old slept in the wagon; the older children took the tent. Just weeks prior to making the three-month journey, Tom was badly injured which meant the Whittakers's sons had to step in during the trip, harnessing horses and performing the work that their father would have tackled, had he been able.

"Our four-year-old didn't quite understand," says Linda—that may have been the bitterest pill Linda had to swallow on the trip. "But watching her helped me understand pioneer kids. She would find things to do. She was always building with rocks and sticks."

On the same trip, Shauna Dicken traveled as a single mom (her husband couldn't take the time off work). With her were



Handcart Pioneer sculpture, Temple Square, Salt Lake City, Utah

four daughters ranging in age from five to fifteen. Shauna's personal goal was to be as authentic as possible, having read her great-great-grandmother's journal recounting the experience of a single mom on the original wagon train. The five women drove their own antique wagon, slept under a pole tent, made their clothes, and did everything for themselves.

Both Shauna and Linda agree that, although it was only a summer, their families earned a far greater appreciation of their ancestors' lives than they would have gained by reading a book or watching a movie.

"I think each one of our kids, as they take time to reflect, just marvel at what they did," says Linda. "There's a difference in living something and just hearing about it. Living it is terribly emotionally hard."



Image courtesy of Goldfilm Productions <www.goldfilm.com>

Greg Kelly, right, retracing the steps of his relatives who served in World War I

“The camera doesn’t really disrupt you but you are aware of it,” says Buffalo Soldiers reenactor Henry B. Crawford. And there may be a little comfort in knowing that no one is going to let you die on screen.

As for life beyond the ranch, there was really no time to consider it. “It was a two-pronged experience,” Cooke says. “There was the experience of being in a television show and the experience of being in 1867. But as much as you’re trying to stay in tune with what’s going on [in the production], you still have to survive and get dinner on the table. It’s really hard work.”

Crawford agrees. “The camera doesn’t really disrupt you but you are aware of it,” he says. And there may be a little comfort in knowing that no one is going to let you die on screen.

For twenty-year-old college student Greg Kelley, retracing the steps of a pair of relatives who served in World War I also helped him appreciate just how cushy life is now.

“We were placed in tough circumstances,” says Kelley, a participant in the upcoming Canadian television series *The Great War*. More than three hundred this-generation Canadians were chosen to participate in the project, each one approximately the same age of their ancestor while serving in World War I. For Kelley, a history major at McGill University, the transition from the twenty-first century back to 1917 was definitely noticeable.

“We were better fed than the troops would have been,” he says, noting that rations weren’t comparable to a good home-cooked or even a school-cafeteria-cooked meal. “We ate a lot of bully beef”—canned, pickled beef. Conditions, too, were also less than desirable. The participants fought for highly interrupted sleep under the stars and the rain; stood watch; lived in small, primitive, leaky tents; marched; relived battles from the trenches; learned fear and fatigue; and existed as much like the soldiers they represented as possible.

“It was very muddy,” Kelley, one of the younger participants, says. “But we got a brief glimpse of what it was like for our ancestors.”

EMERGING KNOWLEDGE

Kelley’s situation was unique. He had published memoirs to accompany him on the reenactment, *The Great War as I Saw It*, written by his great-great-grandfather, Canon Scott, Chaplain of the First Canadian Division. But before being chosen to participate in the project, Kelley hadn’t read them.

“Reading the book was always on my to-do list, but my family’s version was old and frail. Eventually I went on Amazon and bought a reprinted copy of the book,” he says. In the field, he carried the memoirs with him.

"Before the project, most of what I knew was just kind of very basic, just stories. I was told about my family background here and there," Kelley says. "I went to the McCord Museum [of Canadian History in Montreal]. I went through the research and letters [my great-great grandfather] wrote home. I did the same with my great-great-uncle. I spoke to my great-aunt and great-uncle about what he was like. I really got a sense of who they were."

Kelley used the memoirs for basic details and points of reference. But when the group arrived in Ypres, Belgium, the words took on deeper meaning as Kelley revisited them as a soldier.

"I retraced a lot of my great-great-grandfather's steps," Kelley says, "and could compare everything with what he wrote. It was very neat to be following in his footsteps and to get that firsthand knowledge of the war. It helped me understand what he went through."

Kelley was chosen for the project because of his interest in history and his well-known great-great-grandfather. But his most insightful moments may have come in relation to his great-great-uncle, a soldier who died and was buried in Europe while serving for Canada during the war. Kelley visited the grave.

"He was a lawyer. He was sort of interested in the same things as me, in history," says Kelley. "But visiting my great-great-uncle's grave . . . I realized he's so far from home. It's not easy for my family members to go visit him. Here's someone who was very close to his own—my own—family, and he's lying in a foreign grave in a foreign country. Only my great-uncle and I have been there to see him."

TAKING AND REMAKING HISTORY

"[Reenacting] adds a dimension to learning that cannot be provided through books and lectures," says Crawford. "Historical reenacting gives us an opportunity to try to relive the experiences of someone else . . . within the context of his own time and place. Living history truly brings the past to life."

For Cooke, reliving family history also meant debunking misconceptions. "All of

Whose Life Was It Anyway?

This is your life. Who doesn't recognize those four simple words?

Those four words first entered the American cultural lexicon after General Omar Bradley approached radio personality Ralph Edwards about developing a show that would help returning World War II veterans, particularly paraplegics. Edwards ran with the idea, putting a guest, twenty-two-year-old Lawrence Tranter, in the hot seat as part of a special segment of a radio broadcast of *Truth or Consequences*.

Two years later, that segment evolved into its own radio show, retitled *This Is Your Life*. In 1952, it jettisoned to television.

The premise of the show—during the initial radio run in the 1940s, the first television run in the 1950s, and later incarnations of the program in the 1970s and 1980s—has always been the same: an unprepared guest meets the people who shaped his or her life. Viewers loved it.

"The comment we get most is that people like seeing into other people's lives, getting to know people in a personal way," says Bianca Pino, a producer on the 1970s syndicated version who still works with the show's DVD collections today. "It's a time line really. People have a sense of getting know someone in a way that doesn't happen in other venues."

Each show was a live personal history. Initially, the guests were everyday people. Later, celebrities were featured.

"*This Is Your Life* was a show about reunions," Pino says. "One of the best family reunions was on the show featuring Hannah Bloch Kohner who was reunited with her brother. The last time she saw him was in the concentration camp in Germany ten years earlier. One of the most fun was Johnny Cash: there aren't many places where you can see three generations of the Carter Cash clan together—Maybelle Carter, June and Johnny, and their kids."

Finding a *This Is Your Life* that featured your own ancestor may be a stretch, although more than five hundred shows were produced. However, even if your family isn't featured, watching the old ones can be very eye opening.

Like the one featuring actress Sarah Berner. "Her show was aired live in 1952, the first year *This Is Your Life* was on TV. It seems that Sarah had an aunt who loaned her a dress for a performance. Sarah thought the aunt had passed away—until Ralph Edwards brought [the aunt] out on stage, very much alive," says Pino. Priceless, live television.

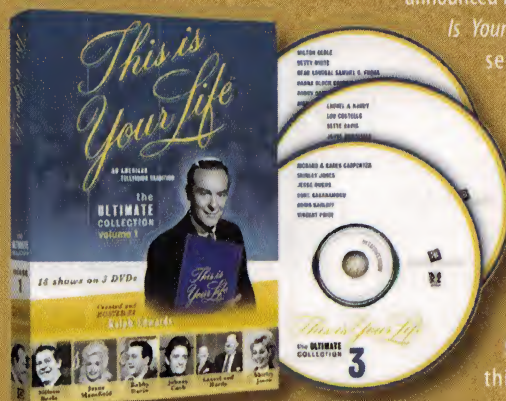
While Edwards died late last year, the show lives on. In November 2005, ABC announced it would be bringing *This*

Is Your Life back as a special series, inducting a new

generation of subjects and viewers.

But fans of the old stuff needn't feel left out—*This Is Your Life: Volume 1* is currently available as a three-disc DVD

set from <www.thisisyourlife.com>.



us have been through census records. There are occupations for men, but the women are always 'keeping house,' and the daughters are helping the mother. You kind of become numb to that. But the women—it was such an intense job."

Day in, day out, simply surviving was hard work. Cooke had to make everything from scratch—food, clothes, you name it. "It's up to you if you're going to improve something," she says. As basic as the work was—sustenance the prime motivator—it never let up. When the sun set, the family was still hungry, dirty, exhausted, spent.

The work, however, was also eye-opening. "What men accomplished in their trailblazing was really a partnership with the women," Cooke says. "Every aspect of it for the men was such an intense job. What man would want to go out in 110 degrees with just a canteen? It was critical that our female ancestors kept a home and that they kept it happy to come home to."

In the end, like Kelley, Crawford, and virtually anyone who has spent a portion of their own life reliving an ancestor's, Cooke walked away from the experience with a greater hold on what it meant to be her ancestor and developed a closeness and gratitude to family—both here and gone—far beyond what would have existed otherwise.

"I came to understand why when I go back just a couple of generations, I keep seeing references to [my ancestors'] faith," she says. "I came to understand what their faith meant to them. These are women who had to lean on God to get them through each day."

And today? "We came out of the experience a stronger family—stronger and more bonded," says Cooke. "We found out how much we really liked each other, how capable we are. It was amazing. You get out there and realize you're a speck. It's very humbling. But, as my oldest daughter says, 'I'm glad that I did it.' And, absolutely, I would do it again." ♀

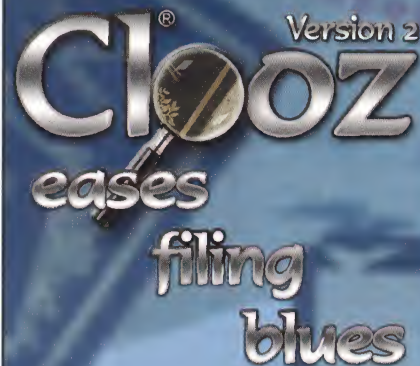
Jeanie Croasmun can be reached at jcroasmun@ancestrymagazine.com.

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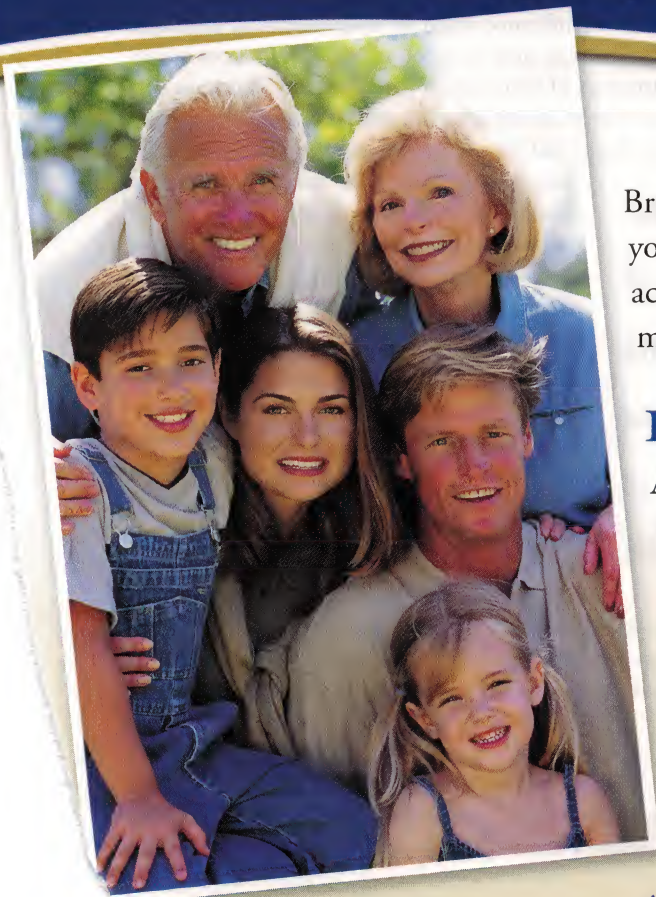
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New Information, Old Sources

by Donn Devine, CG, CGI



Most of us started our research from home and family sources. First we questioned older living family members, and then we quickly went on to whatever documents the family had saved.

The family history value of some documents was probably immediately obvious—bible records, birth, marriage and death certificates, letters, diaries, military records, naturalization records, school diplomas, old newspaper clippings, wedding invitations, birth announcements. But for some other family sources, we may not have recognized their usefulness until later.

In any case, after extracting their genealogical content, we probably returned these documents to whatever sanctuary had previously preserved them, or assembled them for storage in a new, safer environment. We then moved on to sources outside the home to supplement that original information.

As we search more broadly, however, we can easily overlook the *continuing* value of the home sources we started from—frequently the only sources available for certain bits of information they contain. And these original home sources may be able to provide new clues to other sources outside the family—names of people, neighborhoods, churches, and businesses.

Generally we return to the early records on which we've based our family history only when conflicts arise or questions are raised about the validity of some item of information. Otherwise, most of us seldom go back to look again at those often-fragile documents from which we began our

search—after all, we already extracted everything of value. Or did we?

It's surprising how much new meaning old records can take on after several years of additional research. Names that had no significance when we originally read (and even ignored) them can now be recognized as relatives or associates. Surnames of witnesses at baptisms and weddings may have since been identified with related families. Names or addresses from old letters, post cards, and address books may suggest links to family branches in distant locales. Records relating to school, church, employment, or military service may open the door to institutional publications and archived records. Dated references to other localities can lead to newspaper accounts and other sources of information.

Don't let the continuing value of your old family papers go unrealized. Make it a point on a set date each year—say on your birthday or a holiday like Memorial Day—to go back to those old yellowing documents you started with, whether they're in a trunk in the attic, your bottom desk drawer, or a bank safety deposit box. It's almost certain that you'll find an item that takes on new significance because of something you learned since the last time you went through the file. ♪

Names that had no
significance when we
originally read (and
even ignored) them can
now be recognized as
relatives or associates.

Donn Devine, CG, CGI, a genealogical consultant from Wilmington, Delaware, is an attorney for the city and archivist of the Catholic Diocese of Wilmington.

Toning Your Family History Physique

by Lisa A. Alzo, M.F.A.

Ready to tone up your family history physique? When we're working out our family histories, we want results—and we want them *yesterday*. But sometimes we're our own worst enemies. We hesitate. We procrastinate. We hem and haw. We even close our minds to certain details or limit ourselves to a few tried and true methods of research.

How do we get over these hurdles? Empowerment.

The initial steps in genealogy may be the most challenging, but they're also the most essential. If we empower our family history research, we assert authority over our most difficult research problems—road blocks, misconceptions, myths, and plain old frustration. And once we're conditioned to stay in control, there's no hurdle we can't jump.

The first move? Start with the following exercises:

- 1. Strategic Moves.** Set an objective, note what you already know, make some guesses, seek out key sources, and locate appropriate records. Invest in folders, binders, and a good software program and label everything.
- 2. Web Workouts.** Many online sites have automated notification features that alert you when search data is added or updated. RootsWeb <www.rootsweb.com> can notify you of new surname or location message board postings; eBay <www.ebay.com> lets you store favorite searches—maybe “high school yearbooks PA”—in My eBay.
- 3. Mind Openers.** Just because your aunt said that your surname has always been spelled a certain way, that doesn't make it so. Be open to other possibilities for any information you uncover. Family history plot lines can be filled with unexpected twists and turns. Learn how to embrace them.
- 4. Unlikely Look-Sees.** While it's tempting to stick with your tried-

and-true methods of research, try a

detour through alternative sources like yearbooks and school, funeral home, and fraternal organization records—you may find valuable details about an ancestor's life that you didn't know before.

5. Brain Extenders. Stay informed. Read family history publications, blogs, mailing lists, and weekly newsletters. Brush up on social history through community education courses or online workshops. There is always a new how-to book, database, software program, or technique that can make exploring your family history much easier.

6. Connecting Dots. Try connection services like the one available at Ancestry.com <www.ancestry.com/cb> or utilize message boards. Join local genealogical groups, historical societies, and ethnicity-specific organizations.

7. Risk Lifters. No pain, no gain works for family history, too. Put forth an effort and get results. Make inquiries, contact people with similar interests, follow your intuition, and interview that relative before it's too late. The more you go out on a limb for your family history, the more branches of your family tree you're likely to touch. And the stronger your grasp will be. ♪

Lisa A. Alzo is the author of a number of books including Three Slovak Women and Finding Your Slovak Ancestors (Heritage Productions). She can be reached at <www.lisaalzo.com>.

Tools for Building Family History Muscle

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Genealogy Groups and Societies

<www.cyndislist.com/society.htm>

Podcasts

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A Mule, a Call, and a New Family

by Vivian McEady-Lindsey

I discovered my love of genealogy while in college. By then, many of my older relatives were deceased. Pop Pop, however, lived until my senior year, and toward the end of his life, he told me the tale of his dad, my great-grandfather, Preston McEady.

Preston, said Pop Pop, was a short, brown-skinned man with an untalkative nature and an ungodly temper. He had an aversion to having his picture taken and, said Pop Pop, would never talk about his pre-marriage life. Sometime during the spring of 1908 in Georgia, Preston set out to buy a mule from a neighbor known for cheating African Americans. That didn't matter to Preston, said Pop Pop. He knew a good deal when he saw one.

Two days later, Preston tried to return the mule. "This mule won't work," he told the neighbor. The neighbor's answer? Too bad.

Preston wasn't satisfied so he got the sheriff. The sheriff, however, sided with the neighbor. This caused a fight. The neighbor punched Preston. Preston punched back. The sheriff reached for his gun. Preston reached for his own gun and fired—the shot hit the sheriff, cutting off his nose.

Preston knew he'd be lynched for shooting a white man, the sheriff nonetheless. So he left, took off, running for—and catching—the nearest train. Pop Pop, who was only six, never saw his father again. The only contact the family had with Preston after that day was a single letter implying that he was living either in Louisiana or Texas. Preston, unfortunately, wouldn't say which. He was afraid that the sheriff might be monitoring his mail.

Once I heard this tale, I felt an intense desire to know what had become of my great-grandfather Preston. I wanted to find out for Pop Pop, but, most of all, I wanted to find out for myself.

Pop Pop told me that Preston was from the Carolinas—a decent trek from where my family was in New Jersey. To make matters more confusing, Pop Pop didn't know which of the Carolinas Preston hailed from. I decided to look anyway, approximating Preston's year of birth as 1882, twenty years before Pop Pop's birth. To try to justify this guess, I looked up Preston in the 1880 census. He wasn't there.

I decided to check phone directories for McEadys, and I located some in Florida. I wrote to them, told them my story, and asked them if they knew Preston. No, they said, they didn't know Preston. But they did tell me that the McEadys were originally from South Carolina and that their name had been spelled a variety of ways. However, the original name was simply Eady.

I decided to use their information and start my search with South Carolina and look for the last name Eady in the census. This time I found not one Preston, but two—both living in South Carolina in Pee Dee Township. Both Preston Eadys were black, but one was born in 1877 and the other one was born in 1861.

Now I was in a quandary—was one of these my ancestor? I decided to check the 1900 census for Eadys in Laurens County, Georgia, since I knew my grandfather was born there. I could compare the age of the Preston there to the Prestons in the South Carolina census. I found the younger



Preston living with an Elmira in another county in Georgia, but I didn't find the older Preston.

I knew that the Preston I was looking for had married my great-grandmother Lizzie Burch in Laurens County. I searched the Laurens County Probate Court and found a marriage license issued to Elizabeth Burch and Presley McEadey on 8 May 1892. So now he was using Presley and McEadey instead of Preston and Eady.

The younger Preston was born in 1877 and that would make him fifteen if he had gotten married in 1892. It was young, but not out of the realm of possibility. But I knew my great-grandmother was twenty when she got married, and I doubted that she would have married such a younger man. Besides, the census had the younger Preston married to another woman. These reasons lead me to believe that the Preston born in 1861 was probably my great-grandfather.

Armed with information, I attempted to trace the older Preston through the 1910 census. I knew that he left Georgia around 1908 or 1910, so I doubted I would find him. I found Lizzie Eady living with Pop Pop (Melvin) and three other children. She was listed as single. Preston was already gone.

I made a couple of blind stabs at locating him, looking through censuses for Louisiana and Texas but with no luck. I also tried to request a death certificate from the Texas Board of Health, but I had no idea of when or where he died or if he had ever even been in Texas. I struck out on a similar request in Louisiana.

Then one day, my Uncle Jerry happened to mention that when he was younger, a stranger approached him and said, "Hey, McEady!" When my uncle inquired how this stranger knew his name, the stranger replied, "Aren't you one of the Lake Charles McEadys? There's a bunch of them down there and you look just like 'em."

Lake Charles, Louisiana—finally a clue. I knew that it was just a shot in the dark, but I wrote again to the Louisiana Board of Health for a death certificate, anyway. They still couldn't find him.

And with that, I just gave up.

Then one day at my job years later, something unusual occurred—I got a message from Brenda McEady. Who was Brenda McEady? I had no idea. But I knew my Aunt Melvina had a number of kids and I knew only a few of them by name. Maybe Brenda was one of hers.

I dialed Brenda's number and told her who I was, and she, in turn, told me that she had received my name from a mutual business contact. Then we started comparing family stories and discovered both of our families were from South Carolina originally and both of them moved to Georgia. We wondered if we might be related. We decided to meet.



**Pop Pop (Melvin McEady),
the author's grandfather and
son of Preston McEady**

At our meeting, Brenda showed me a picture of her daughter—the spitting image of my cousin. I knew then that we had to be related, but neither Brenda nor I knew how. Brenda gave me her aunt Rosalee's number, telling me that her aunt would definitely know more.

I was apprehensive about calling a stranger so I spent a few weeks building up my nerve. Eventually I called. And was I glad I did. Rosalee Charles, nee McEady, told me that my great-grandfather Preston was her granduncle.

She knew that Preston had gotten into trouble with the law in South Carolina (this was before he ever got to Georgia). And just like the story I heard, this one, too, had Preston leaving the state in a hurry with no one ever hearing from him again. This probably explained why Preston never divulged his past to Pop Pop.

I still haven't found out what happened to Preston after he fled Georgia, but that day, I learned why I'd never met more than a few relatives on the McEady side of my family. Preston severed the ties, and his own brothers and sisters hadn't heard anything more from him than his own son had when a similar situation arose again years later.

But I found them, Pop Pop's and my extended family. And next month, my family—the Yankee McEadys—finally plan to meet my other family—the Dixie McEadys—for a giant McEady family reunion. After all these years, what an amazing gathering that will be. *Q*

Vivian J. McEady-Lindsey is a wheelchair-bound, forty-six-year-old mom living in New Jersey. She has been writing since she was old enough to hold a pencil.

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Greetings from the Land of Change

by Beau Sharbrough

Not long ago, I came into possession of some photos that were taken about fifty years ago by my grandparents—pictures of a vacation through the southwest. My grandmother, looking quite a bit younger than I remember her, was climbing on a large road sign. I think it said “Welcome to Arizona” or the like.

Looking at the photos, I thought that it would be interesting to stand today in the place where each of the photos was made and really try to understand the setting—both now and when my grandparents visited.

There’s probably still a “Welcome” sign when you get to Arizona, but it’s doubtful that the scenery around the sign is the same and even less likely that people are climbing the sign. In fact, it’s also almost a sure thing that the settings in my grandparents’ vacation photos (yours’, too) are different now than they were when the pictures were snapped. Why? Technology, innovation, and time—what we think of as relaxing today may not have been conceived of fifty or one hundred years ago. And, like in the following examples, what was once thought to be a photo-worthy vacation probably doesn’t seem quite so relaxing today.

You can’t get there from here

When I was in college in the 1970s, I had to drive about one hundred miles from my parents’ home to get to school.

The trip involved stopping at lights and going through the downtowns of a number of small towns, like Hempstead, Navasota, and Marlin. By the end of the 1970s, there was a bypass for every one of these towns and things changed, like the commercial opportunities to sell to travelers like me, for the bypassed old-town businesses.

For most of human history,
the best way to get sick was
to drink the water. Wine,
beer, and ale were the only
things you could drink that
would not make you ill,
although there were other
(hic) side effects

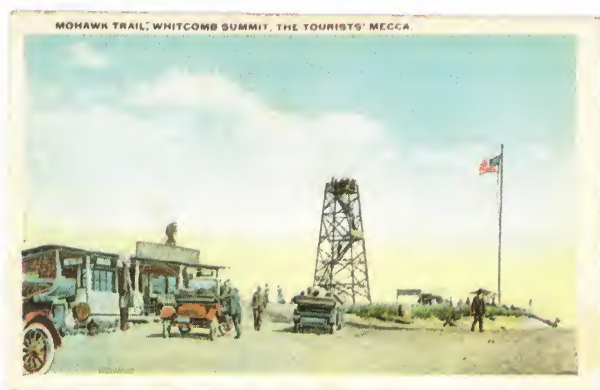
There were only three Sheraton hotels in 1940. In 1965, there were one hundred. In 1952, the first Holiday Inn opened in Memphis; today there are over 2,800 worldwide. Our grandparents didn’t have hotel chains to choose from when they drove through a town, and their efforts to find a place they liked resulted in a lot of hit-and-miss stops.

Trips taken in the 1950s included slow drives through towns you never heard of. The slower pace and atmosphere wasn’t seen as a problem—it was an opportunity for new and unique experiences. That attitude has pretty much disappeared from modern travel. Now we drive to the

airport, fly to another airport, and drive a rental car to what could be the same hotel in almost any city.

Don’t drink the water

For most of human history, the best way to get sick was to drink the water. Wine, beer, and ale were the only things you could drink that would not make you ill, although there were other (hic) side effects.



All postcards courtesy of Mary L. Martin, LTD Postcards, Perryville, Maryland. Each is featured in the Ancestry.com historical postcards collection, containing more than 50,000 postcards from 1900–1960, online beginning June 2006. Access the collection at <http://content.ancestry.com/iexec/?dbid=8705>.

The quest for clean water led first to filtration, then to distribution. In mid-nineteenth-century London, town officials noticed a decrease in cholera deaths during the 1849 and 1853 epidemics in places where slow sand filters had been installed. In the United States, by the 1920s, we had just about eliminated waterborne disease epidemics, thanks to filtration. In the 1940s, we went a step further by adopting our first set of drinking water standards. By the early 1960s, we had nearly 20,000 municipal water systems operating in the United States.

All of this led to the placement of signs at the edge of town proudly announcing that the municipal water supply was approved, although I never saw a sign warning that a town had really bad water and not to drink it. Odds are good, however, that our traveling grandparents occasionally had to balance on a knife blade wondering whether it was really worth the risk of water-borne disease by entering some unlucky town and drinking from the tap.

Let's stop and eat

In 1891, the YWCA of Kansas City, Missouri, established what was considered the first cafeteria. Forty-five years later, the drive-in restaurant concept—where patrons are served food in their vehicles—began in Glendale, California.

The McDonald brothers converted their San Bernadino, California, barbeque into a limited-menu drive-in in 1948. They sold so many burgers and shakes that, in 1954, they bought eight Multimixers from salesman Ray Kroc. Kroc's curiosity led him to become the brothers' first franchisee, and he opened the first McDonald's franchise in 1955 in Des Plaines, Illinois. The restaurant took in \$366 on the first day. Now there are over 30,000 McDonald's in 119 countries, and travelers will find just about the same thing in each of them.

Today's fast-food is nothing like the meals our grandparents ate while traveling. Usually they visited a restaurant or a café—the latter having faster, cheaper options but limited menu choices compared to the former. At any rate, eating on the road was part of the adventure.

Turn that down

Remember all of those radios on the 1930 census? In 1931, they started broadcasting *Little Orphan Annie*. In 1938, it was *Invasion from Mars* by Orson Welles. No sooner did radio create a regional culture of shared experiences than television did the same thing—but more intensely.

TV set production went from zero to sixty in no time: in 1947 it was 178,571; in 1948, 975,000; and in 1950, 7,463,800. The sets had to warm up, tubes went out, and everything was black and white. When you turned them off you saw a white dot in the center of the screen for a little while. Television stations signed off at night and on again in the morning

usually with the national anthem and a clip of air force jets flying past a flag.

Roughing it today is renting a cabin in the woods that doesn't come equipped with satellite TV—even worse if you forget your portable DVD player. Your grandparents, however, probably thought of TV as something new, and it's doubtful that they chose a hotel based on the availability of a television in the room.

Refrigerated air

I grew up in Houston, and we didn't have central air conditioning until I was in the eighth grade. Before that time, I don't remember being particularly hot. We just made it a point to sit by a window and run a fan. Plus I got to make a mess of any papers I was writing by dragging my sweaty hands over them.

The development of electrical power plants in the 1880s led to the opportunity to get a really big air conditioning bill. When they rebuilt the Empire Theater in Montgomery, Alabama, in 1917, it was the first theater to use refrigeration (or not, people are still arguing about it). What's clear is that before that time, you couldn't go into a movie house to cool off on a hot summer day.

In 1928, the chamber of the House of Representatives was air-conditioned. I don't want to think about why we had to cool off movie-goers for eleven years before we cooled off congressmen, but it might be that there was no hope of them working in the summer anyway. In 1953, room air-conditioner sales exceeded 1 million. In 1998, shipments of whole-house air conditioners and heat pumps set a record of more than 6.2 million units.

You can safely assume that your grandparents didn't always have air conditioning in their homes and that their grandparents didn't even know what it was. And neither of them found many motels touting refrigerated air.

Step back

When you stumble upon old vacation photos in an attic, see if you can understand the changes that were taking place in the world when the pictures were snapped. Remember, in the 1950s, 1940s, 1930s, and long before, people had different ways of driving, cooling, lodging, eating, and



entertaining themselves. Study the pictures, the places, the people, and the time, then take a little rest. When you do, you just may discover something new about your family and why you are who you are. *Q*

Beau Sharbrough is a noted speaker and writer on topics relating genealogy and technology. His genealogy website is <www.rootsworks.com>.

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GARY MIRACLE'S MIRACLE



It started with a letter saying someone had located Gary Miracle's dog tags and wanted to return them—thirty years after Miracle's death in Vietnam.

For Karen Kolbe, the recipient of the letter and Miracle's sister, the message was a mixed blessing.

"I was stunned," she says. "I thought why after all this time are his dog tags coming home? Why, after thirty-some years? Why is this happening?"

The letter was from TOP (Tour of Peace) Vietnam Veterans, a non-profit group that, among other projects, reunites veterans, descendants, or other family members with dog tags they find in Vietnam. It's a process that sounds much simpler than it really is.

But locating the rightful family of a soldier who may have either been injured or killed in Vietnam, who may not have had descendants at the time of enlistment, whose family may have split or moved around the globe, and whose parents may no longer be living isn't a simple task. It's one, however, that TOP volunteer Linda Stocker has made easier through genealogy.

Stocker got involved in the project with her husband, also a Vietnam veteran. Blame serendipity, but she learned

of the dog tag–return program at about the same time that she was developing an interest in family history. The two seemed to go hand in hand.

Prior to TOP sending a letter, Stocker does her homework, employing similar steps for each set of dog tags the organization tries to return. Her first step is to determine if the soldier was killed in action or if he or she returned

home. Using an all-access subscription donated by Ancestry.com, Stocker searches in the site's military databases. She also tries the Social Security Death Index (SSDI), although usually her SSDI searches are futile. ("The men who were killed in action don't always show up in the SSDI because they weren't employed before entering the military," says Stocker, "or because their families never applied for benefits.") After exhausting these two resources, Stocker moves next to the site's

online family trees and message boards and the obituary collection.

"You have to work with what clues you have. With a soldier, you know their hometown and you know their name," says Stocker. "From there, I just go in and start digging. So far, I've been really lucky—at least one time out of ter



It took a little time, but eventually Kolbe felt that accepting the dog tags was something she was meant to do.

I'll find an actual family tree, and I'll find surviving family members."

Stocker takes whatever family information she learns at Ancestry.com, makes a few educated guesses and searches for more facts on memorial websites and family websites. Her goal is to find the closest surviving family member, which, at times, means Stocker is also researching a veteran's parents, siblings, and collateral relatives—building an entire family tree. When she's satisfied that she's found the right family member, Stocker conducts one final search at Ancestry.com, in the site's People Finder, for current contact information.

Finally, a letter is sent from Jess DeVaney, TOP president, notifying the surviving family members that TOP has the soldier's dog tags and would like to hand them over, if the family is interested. Sometimes DeVaney hears back from the family. Sometimes he doesn't.

"We usually have the phone number," says DeVaney, "but we choose not to give them a call. They receive a letter, they can process the information, and sometimes it's a long time before they respond. Everyone reacts in different ways. Some of [the families] are just so happy to get the dog

tags back—they're always moved. It's a surprise to have that door opened again. Usually it's a good thing. But sometimes it's very sad."

It was both—good and sad—for Kolbe. After receiving the letter, Kolbe had her daughter research TOP, making sure the organization was legitimate. In the meantime, Kolbe prepared herself to receive the dog tags.

"I didn't know how to interpret any of it," says Kolbe. "The whole thing was like being in a dream and not being able to understand what was going on."

It took a little time, but eventually Kolbe felt that accepting the dog tags was something she was meant to do. Learning that someone had the dog tags "made it somehow seem like Gary was here or he was trying to tell me something," says Kolbe. "It took me back to when Gary told me he was joining the marines. And when he came home on leave—he had an expert marksmanship medal. I told him it was like he signed a death warrant. I couldn't see him off. I wrote to him later to tell him I was sorry I wasn't there. But, really, I just couldn't handle it."

Finally, at Kolbe's request, TOP mailed the dog tags to her on 17 January 2006.

"It felt kind of eerie at first," says Kolbe today. "[The dog tags] brought back all of the memories—hearing that he died, that everyone was coming home, of going to the funeral, of my mom saying it's not him, it's not him. Only it was."

Now the dog tags sit in Kolbe's bedroom. She plans to give one to her surviving sibling, a sister—she's just waiting for the right time and right way to do it.

"A lot of those kids died for nothing," she says. "But getting the dog tags . . . it was like [Gary] saying he made his peace with it. Now I have to."

—Jeanie Croasmun





Wine,

Story,



and Song

The Art of Family History

What do you do when you're inspired to share the sheaves of notes, the piles of photos, the entire accumulation of your family's past? You can take the traditional routes—planting information on a displayed family tree, framing photos, building a website, or slipping the whole shebang into scrapbook pages. Or you can choose an alternative avenue and find a new way to share your family's story with the world. That's what the following three artists did, and continue to do, through their family history inspired wines, stories, and songs.

by Paul Rawlins

Michael Taggares

Tagaris Winery



If you look, you can still find members of the Tagaris family residing in the Greek village of Tholo, not far from a statue of Emanuel Tagaris, the family patriarch who started planting vineyards there in the 1300s.

Half a world away in eastern Washington, it's not much of a stretch to say that winemaker Michael Taggares—a descendant of Emanuel Tagaris—has wine in his blood. Winemaking, you see, is a tradition, a love, and maybe even a hereditary trait that's been passed down through generation after generation of the Tagaris family.

Ever since Emanuel planted his first grapevines, the Tagaris family has been connected to growing grapes. So much so that during battles in the Ottoman era, the women and children in the family would go into hiding in the Peloponnese, returning only to tend their vineyards. And, of course, make wine.

Eventually someone had to split away from the family's vines. Pete Tagaris, Michael's grandfather, was that someone, leaving Greece for America when he was just eighteen. He passed through Ellis Island and worked his way west as a cook on the railroads, during which time the family name became Taggarres. When Pete passed through Prosser, Washington, the land reminded him so much of his homeland that he settled there.

Grandpa Pete threw himself into homespun businesses, which eventually grew to include a car dealership, a grocery store, and a bank. But Pete never turned his back on the family love of farming and growing grapes. He made his own wines, storing the casks in his root cellar.

Today Michael celebrates his family's vintner traditions through seven hundred acres of wine grapes and a portfolio of wines bearing the family name. In 1989 he established Tagaris Winery, adopting the name's traditional spelling in honor of his roots. The winery's new restaurant even houses a few of Grandpa Pete's wine casks. Says Michael, the art, the business, and the wine bring together "the essence of what our family is all about—fine wine, farm fresh food, and lively conversation."

Liz Petry

Can Anything Beat White? A Black Family's Letters



Jessup, Georgia. 1 November 1905

I would not write you but I am in a terrible fix here I got into after leaveing [sic] Savannah . . .

After years as a reporter, Liz Petry knew she had a good story when she saw this letter among her mother's papers.

The letter was from Willis H. James, writing to ask his sister for \$35 to bribe a sheriff and escape a lynching. It was one of hundreds of letters written between 1890 and 1910 by Willis Samuel James, his wife Anna E. Houston James, and their children: Willis H., Bertha, Harriet, Harry, and Helen.

The James children had already been the basis for many stories by Liz Petry's own mother, Ann, whose 1946 novel *The Street* was the first by an African American woman to sell over 1.5 million copies. But as Liz explored the letters, she found what she felt was untapped history—and new family.

Harry E. "Rama Hama" James, who wrote home saying "please send candy," became Liz's favorite character. "I hadn't heard anything about Uncle Harry [before finding the letters]," she says.

Through each letter she read, she learned more about her ancestors and her extended family tree. Ultimately, the letters inspired Liz to craft her own book, driving her to quit her job as a journalist so she could focus full time on sharing her family's history.

Today, Liz refers the published book, *Can Anything Beat White? A Black Family's Letters*, as her "love letter to her family." After editing and organizing six hundred pages of letters, she says, "what comes through is almost a story. This fierce family loyalty they had, caring for each other, financial support, emotional support," she says.

Why a book? Says Liz, while each letter was intended to stand on its own, once she began reading the letters as a collective entity, she realized that the whole story of her family, as told through the words of the individual members, was far more powerful than its parts.

Eliza Gilkyson

Jedidiah 1777



When Eliza Gilkyson set out a personal goal of writing a song exploring her "own roots in patriotism" for her album *Paradise Hotel*, she knew just wher

Creating Your Art

Not everyone is a vintner, an author, or a songwriter. But, says Stephanie Inman, author of the book *Framed Memories: Creative Scrapbooking for Your Home* (Lark Books, 2006), that shouldn't stop you from creating your own artistically inspired family history. The key to success is finding your inspiration.

"Sometimes you have to get inspired by seeing other projects and things you like," says Inman, whose commission work has required her to become inspired by *other* people's family histories. "Figure out what you want to talk about to your family or someone else who comes by."

Why do it? Says Inman, because family history deserves more than just a spot in a file cabinet or attic. "What I love is that [family history] doesn't have to be something that's hidden away. It's important," she says.

Just remember to exhibit restraint. Even in her own work, this is something Inman has to regularly remind herself of. "I gather everything I know and everything that I have, and it's tempting to put it all in," says Inman. "But it's a good idea to edit and have a focus. Just include what moves you the most. Tell your family stories through the objects that you find most moving."

to look for inspiration. Her ancestral uncle Jedediah Huntington was a commanding brigadier general during the Revolutionary War. What she didn't know was that Jedediah had his own song to sing.

A Google search for more information about her uncle led Eliza to an online auction for a collection of Jedediah's letters. "I thought I would use [the collection] for my own purposes," Eliza says, "but it became clear to

me when I read the letters that his was a more interesting story and point of view."

Eliza also learned that Jedediah had a way with words. "It was exciting when I found the first sentence I could actually sing. I thought, 'If I could find five or six of these sentences . . . Jedediah could have his own song and his own voice.'"

The result is the song *Jedediah 1777*, written very much, says Gilkyson, in Jedediah's own words. But not entirely. Gilkyson melds the two worlds—hers and her uncle's—so seamlessly that the listener is hard-pressed to tell who is whom, even as Jedediah talks about hearth and fields, the "noble cause," and his developing relationship with Ann Moore.

Gilkyson's attempt to honor her roots also extend beyond words—even the instrumentation was suggested by the song's historical context, with a penny whistle substituting for a fife.

Today the Revolutionary War isn't just another history lesson for Gilkyson. "It was a family event. It's no longer a textbook thing," she says. Creating and celebrating in her own unique style, a life and a history through song is now more than a personal quest—it's a work of art she shares with her ancestor and listeners all over the world. And one through which she continues to find inspiration.

"[The project] gave me this foundation to lean against," says Gilkyson, "[and] the strength to stand up for my own beliefs." More than two-hundred years later, Jedediah's voice is as commanding as ever. *Q*

Paul Rawlins lives in Salt Lake City, where he is waging a hapless battle to resuscitate his lawn.



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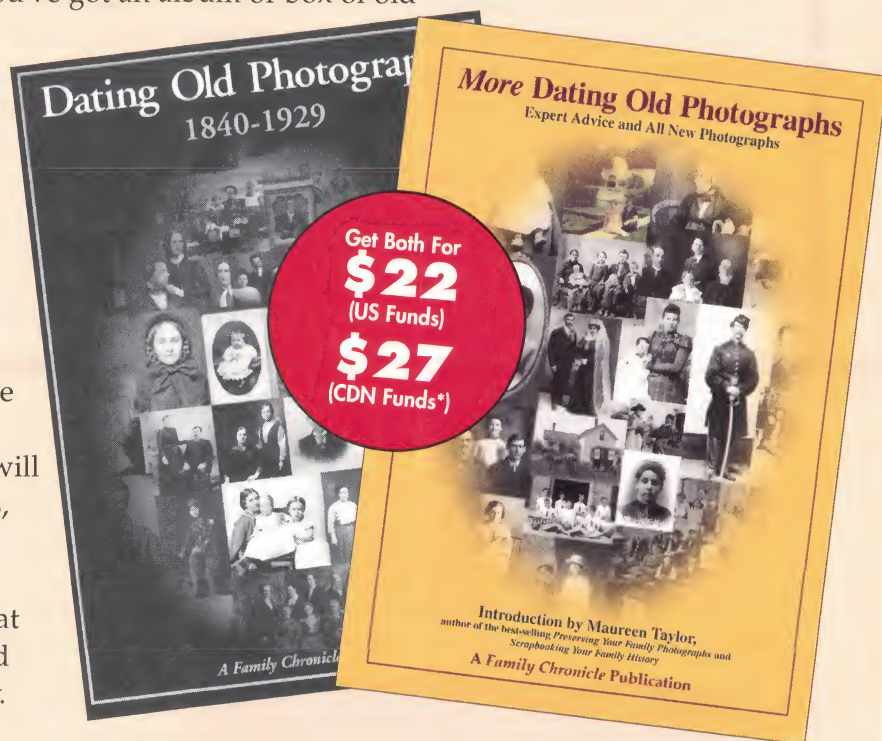
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Welcome to Found, a new feature of Ancestry Magazine in which I take up the hunt to track down the rightful owners of items submitted by you, the readers. You tell me what you have, I go into detective mode to find the home of the first owner or family, and you get to return it. Everyone else gets to read about the sleuthing trail I followed to locate the happy recipient. Who knows, with a bit of luck, you'll learn some tricks for rescuing a few orphan heirlooms yourself, should you feel so inspired. And the best part? These little tricks are handy for conventional genealogy as well.

1940S PHOTO ALBUM

I'll start this inaugural *Found* with one of the most contemporary and far-flung orphan heirloom rescues I've ever done—a photo album from the 1940s. Even if there weren't some dates scattered throughout the album, the images themselves would have made the time period easy to deduce. I don't often tackle such young objects, but this album was especially intriguing because of the story behind it.

From America to Israel and Back

by Megan Smolenyak Smolenyak



What's an orphan heirloom?

An orphan heirloom is an item that's strayed from the hands of the family of origin. It could be the beautiful Victorian photo album you spotted at your favorite antiques store, that family Bible you spotted on eBay, or the old photos you found in the attic of the fixer-upper you just bought. Regardless of how it happens, you'd be surprised how many people wind up with other people's stuff.

Chana Saadia wrote that her mother had come across the album on a street in Jerusalem about nine years ago. Chana, who lives in Jerusalem, came in possession of the album after her mother passed away.

The album owner's name was clearly displayed, but no one around Chana had ever heard of the fellow. Captions on some of the photos suggested a connection to Brooklyn, New York, at one time, so Chana contacted me wondering if perhaps I could locate the original owner. How could I resist such a tempting invitation? The hunt was on.



Washington, D.C. 1935



Joe. Washington, D.C. (my guess)



Long, 1935



Howard and Mary



Washington, D.C.

A GOOD START

I was fortunate to have more clues than I usually start with. I had a name (which I won't share here in the interest of privacy), and while the surname was not especially uncommon, the first name was somewhat unusual. I also had a location. In fact, I had several locations. A link to Brooklyn was apparent, but it appeared that the owner had also lived in Washington, D.C. and traveled elsewhere.

And I had a relationship and a half. By this I mean that I could tell that the owner had a brother named Howard, but, while I had a photo of his mother, I didn't know her name. I could, however, tell that she had lived in America at some point, so it was likely that there was a paper trail somewhere in the United States, even though the album was found in Israel. And finally, I had a time frame—I guesstimated that the original owner would now be in his eighties.

TO THE INTERNET

My first instinct was to jump online to search the 1930 census. The owner would have been a youngster at the time, and I hoped that by focusing on New York and using the owner's

unusual first name, I might be able to surface him quickly. Luck was with me, and I quickly found my subject, along with his brother Howard. I now knew I was looking for a gentleman who should be about eighty-two.

I also discovered that Howard was a few years older and that the brothers' parents had been born in Russia and Argentina. And, of course, I now had the parents' names and rough years of birth—a solid jump forward.

WHAT NEXT?

I had a good fix on the owner's birth family, but I was doubtful that I would

still find anyone in Brooklyn today. After all, the album had wandered, as had the owner, so where was everyone today?

I decided to focus on Howard first. Unfortunately, I quickly located him in both the Social Security Death Index (SSDI) and the California Death Index. He had passed away about twenty years ago, but the California index provided another helpful clue—the mother's maiden name, a highly unusual name I had never encountered before. On the down side, I was now dealing with a family that I knew had connections to Israel, New York, California, Russia, and Argentina.

I also checked the SSDI for the album owner himself, and was relieved to find no likely entry. But was that because he was hale and hearty or because he had moved overseas at some point? Was I wasting my time focusing on the United States?

THE BENEFITS OF AN UNUSUAL NAME

I decided to play a long shot and search on the mother's unusual maiden name to see if anyone had uploaded a tree for this family. For families with deep, colonial roots, there are usually multiple trees, if only due to the sheer number of descendants, but those of us



Several candidates popped up, but one in particular caught my eye... Could my “prey” have been in my backyard all along?

with more recent immigrant roots are not as well represented in such databases yet. Still, it was worth a try.

Nothing popped up in the Ancestry World Tree, but there was a hit in OneWorldTreeSM. It referred me back to an Ancestry World Tree entry I had missed because I had entered “Hettie” for the mother’s first name, while this submitted lineage had her as “Hattie.” But the other details showed that I definitely had the right family.

BACK TO BASICS

Armed with this correction to the mother’s first name, I did another general search and quickly found her in the SSDI. She had died in Brooklyn several decades ago, so apparently not everyone in the family had dispersed far and wide. Maybe the album owner *was* in the United States—and not even as far removed as California.

At this point, I searched phone and address directories at Ancestry.com. Several candidates popped up, but one person in particular caught my eye. He was in New Jersey, not all that far from Brooklyn and, as it happened, not far from where I live. Could my “prey” have been in my backyard all along?

COLD CALLING

Usually, I prefer that submitters make the first contact with a potential recipient, as they’re the one returning the item and I want to be sure that they get the credit. But in this case, Chana lived in Israel and the possible owner lived just a few miles from me.

I picked up the phone, reached the possible owner, and explained the peculiar reason for my call. As sometimes happens, he was doubtful. He didn’t really remember such a photo album, and a call from a stranger

spouting family details was certainly reason for a degree of caution. But even his limited answers assured me that I had the right fellow. Since Chana had sent the album to me, I asked for his e-mail address and sent some scanned photos.

At this point, curiosity overcame his incredulity and he agreed to meet. The result? I received flowers of thanks the next day. And no, he has no clue how his photo album wound up on the streets of Jerusalem, but he’s grateful to Chana for sending a piece of his past back home. ♡

Megan Smolenyak Smolenyak is co-author (with Ann Turner) of Trace Your Roots with DNA: Using Genetic Tests to Explore Your Family Tree and other books. She can be reached at <www.honoringourancestors.com> .



Hey Megan, can you find a home for my stuff?

I’m always willing to try—and you don’t even have to send me the actual item. Just drop me an e-mail (megan@honoringourancestors.com) describing the treasure you’ve found and how you came into possession of it (photo attachments welcome). Also let me know any family or other details regarding the treasure you may have available, such as names, dates, and places, as well as the best way to contact you once I find the heirloom’s owner.

Charge Me for Obituaries?

by George G. Morgan



Using what we already know about a person, it is possible to reconstruct portions of an individual's life from the facts published in an obituary. Obituaries can provide a wealth of important information and research clues and include valuable pointers that can send our research in new directions. They're easy to use and they're easy to access. But they may not remain so useful forever.

A number of newspapers publish obituaries of a reasonable length free of charge as a public service. The addition of a photograph or an especially lengthy obituary text may cost a little more. Unfortunately, there are also a number of newspapers that charge exorbitant rates for publishing obituaries of almost any length in their print publication and perhaps also at their online website.

In researching one newspaper to which I used to subscribe, I found that I could publish the first three lines of an obituary for free, but each additional line came at a cost. Now, a three-line obituary cannot possibly summarize a person's life and provide details of a funeral or memorial service, but, if I opt for a ten-line obituary, this newspaper will tack on a hefty charge. In large-circulation publications, which also tend to be the newspapers covering areas where most of us live, I could be looking at fees

well over \$600—a cost that would probably make me and the average American family think twice about publishing any details.

The impact of the cost for publishing an obituary is guaranteed to inhibit some families from placing obituaries in newspapers altogether. While it might not seem so important today, think about how your own family history research has benefited from a well-written, informative obituary you found. Is it fair to keep future generations from accessing similar information about the lives of our generation? This lack of available obituary information published by our generation will certainly limit or eliminate the number of clues a future generation of genealogists has to investigate. This, in turn, will also stymie a future researcher's ability to locate other original sources.

Charging for obituary content should be a matter of public service rather than merely a business function. For me today, that means any newspaper that charges exorbitant fees to a family to publish an obituary no longer gets my business. ♪

George G. Morgan is president of Aha! Seminars and can be reached at aha@ahaseminars.com.

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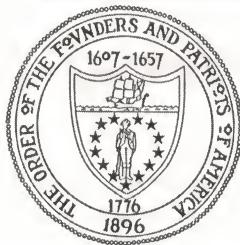
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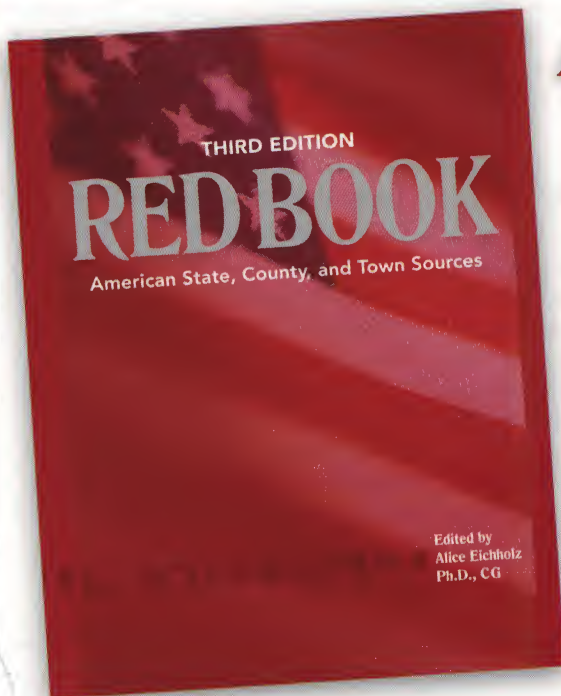
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The Swaddling Cloth

By Lynn Dennis



Maria, a favorite hospice patient of mine, died recently at age ninety-six. I would visit her weekly in the brown-shingled home she shared with her son and daughter.

From her bed in what was once the dining room, Maria could look past a table filled with plants and childhood pictures of her four sons and three daughters to her backyard. On the wall hung a poster of the small, northern Italian fishing village of her youth. Even now with her body spent, as Maria spoke of the past, her gestures still sparked with the strength of a woman who in an earlier life had labored daily mending fishing nets for her father and carrying heavy jugs of well water on her head.

My job as a hospice social worker was to track Maria's needs, to make palpable the thoughts that worried her and her family, and to render peace with these thoughts whenever I could. When I first began working with Maria, her eyes would abruptly shut in pain, her suffering arising less from her body than from her memories of World War

II, of bombs exploding outside the door of her home, of shrapnel tearing away the sight of one child's eye and of the loss of another child to disease.

Initially, I worried whether my protected Midwestern childhood would be a barrier for Maria and me. But Maria dispensed with my uncertainty; she lightly stroked my hands as she assured me that she trusted me. Still, I wondered if we might have a chance to find some kinder, gentler paths of memory to travel together, much like the roads I traveled on in a search for my family's history—roots that continue to speak to me through the voices of a few discovered mementos.

The opportunity to travel that path arose quite accidentally on the next visit when, caught up in the midst of shared memories of mothering, I giddily announced I was a new grandmother and confessed my befuddlement with the renewed popularity of swaddling babies.

Maria's eyes lit up and her head nodded approvingly as soon as I mentioned swaddling.

She quickly directed her son up the narrow steps to the family's attic to retrieve a certain package.

On my next visit, Maria pointed to me to sit next to her as she lifted from that package the swaddling cloth she used for her own children. Its thick, white peasant cotton was slightly yellowed after seventy years but otherwise it was in perfect condition.

Maria explained the proper way to lay a diaper within the cloth and then swaddle a baby securely within. As I listened to Maria's advice and held the swaddling cloth, I felt the base of my neck, that place where a baby nuzzles, warm. Watching Maria's face soften, I believe the same spot on her neck warmed, too.

From that day on, Maria's hold on painful memories slackened and the sounds of war quieted. Over time, she joined her children and me on different sensory adventures as we planted imaginary gardens and envisioned perfect feasts of fresh fish and sun-sweetened fruit.

It seems to me we can be enriched by the treasures of our attics in four ways. We may discover a valuable heirloom that reaps a financial reward. We might find items that stretch our sense of self by connecting us to a historic event. Perhaps we could stumble upon something that enables us to picture ourselves living in the past. But, sometimes our discoveries enable us to identify with transcendent universal human aspirations that make life, under any circumstances, meaningful.

Maria's swaddling cloth, I believe, falls into this last category. Through it I learned that life need not be confined by memories of loss any more than Maria's life had been confined by geographic boundaries. Holding the cloth, Maria forgave me my innocence of war and bonded with me instead in the very human instinct to nurture. The swaddling cloth, then, was both a memento of a particular life and an emblem of continuity and reason in time of chaos.

In her last days of consciousness, Maria recalled the feel of coarse, gravelly sand weaving between her toes as she slid into the sea. When, after her death, her son told me about this recollection, I, with Maria, could also taste the salty air above the waves. ♡

Lynn Dennis is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker currently working for a Boston-area hospice. She also holds a masters degree in Jewish Studies.

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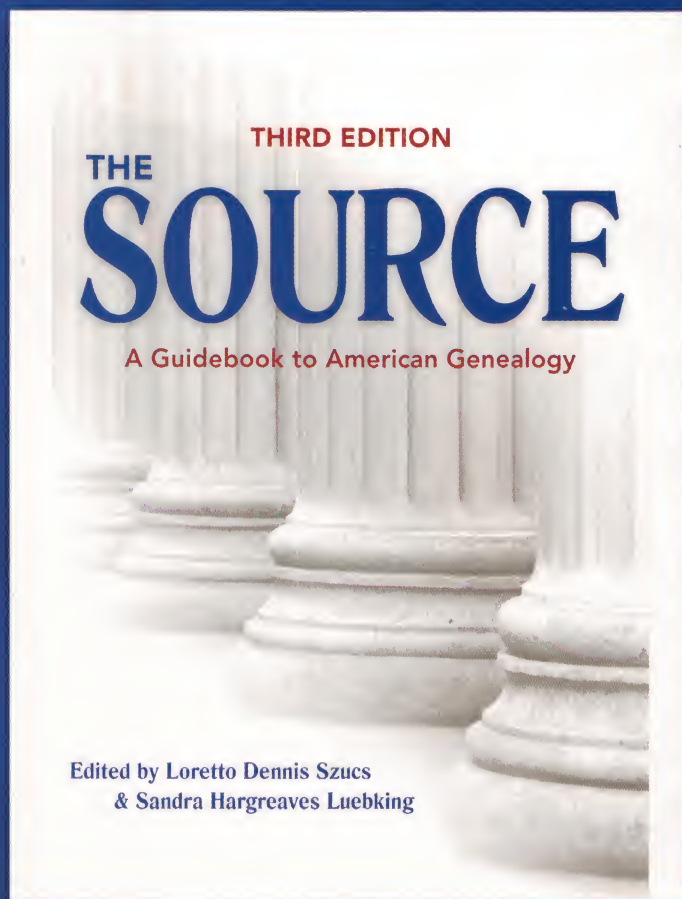
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